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HOW HE WON HER

A Novel.

BY
MRS. EILOART,
AUTHOR OF
"THE CURATE'S DISCIPLINE," "JUST A WOMAN,"
"THE LOVE THAT LIVED," "SOME OF OUR GIRLS," ETC., ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.
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HOW HE WON HER.



CHAPTER I.

NEVER A LITTLE.

REUBEN DEANE sat alone in his own room, busy with many painful thoughts. He had been ill for a fortnight, and this was the first day he had left his bed. The shock of finding his secret hiding-place discovered, and his documents and title-deeds abstracted, had been too much for a frame already weakened by old age. But he had rallied, and was himself again, with as clear a brain, and as resolute a will, as ever.

The deeds had gone. The key of their

hiding-place had never left his possession for a second ; the lock was of the best, and there were no signs that it had been tampered with. Nothing in the woodwork of the cupboard, nothing in the brickwork of the house outside, where he had sent Guy to inspect. It was an inexplicable mystery. If magic had been at work, the theft could not have been wrought more deftly.

The theft did not mean ruin. If he lost the Chalcombe estates, to which these stolen deeds proved his right, he would have more than enough for his own needs, and to give Eunice a moderate portion ; but he had set his heart upon endowing her with these lands. Her husband should be Squire of Chalcombe. She, his next of kin, the one being connected with him by blood, should reign as mistress in the house from which he had been thought unworthy to take a wife.

He brooded night and day over his dis-

appointment. He devised all manner of schemes for the restoration of his missing papers. He was for ever tormenting his brain as to the author of the theft. Mr. Chalcombe would have had a strong motive, but he was not the man to carry out such a scheme. Mr. Glynne had a stronger ; but then, a subtly, cleverly-contrived robbery like this was not in his way at all. 'He would shoot me in a duel if only he could hold the pistol straight,' thought Reuben, 'or he would knock me down, if he had the chance, on a dark night, but this is altogether another affair. This is a planned robbery, and the cleverest robbery that ever I heard of ; and Mr. Glynne is as incapable as the Squire of doing it.

He was a much poorer man through this robbery, but that was nothing to the mortification, the disappointment, he experienced. At one moment he felt as if it would kill him ; at the next, he determined

to live a hundred years but he would see the end of it. Any way, he would have the closet examined by some one better versed in such matters than himself, and, having found *how* the theft had been committed, he might form some guess as to *who* it was that had committed it; and, feeling so far better as to be able to sit up, he had sent for Guy Thurstone to tell him as much.

Like every one who has to do with illness, Guy entreated the patient not to distress himself, to take things easy till he was better, and not to worry himself about what could not be helped.

Then the old man burst forth :

‘ Guy Thurstone, I shall think you are a fool if you talk like that ! I will never rest, and I will never leave off distressing myself, as you call it, till I get those papers back, or see the man hung who has stolen them. Yes, hung, sir, hung ! What ! Are men

to be robbed of their hard-earned savings, that they have toiled for night and day, and there is to be no justice done? Is my girl to be robbed of the dowry I meant for her, and am I to take it calmly, and hope the evil-doer will go free? No, I'm not made of milk and water, Guy Thurstone—neither are you. If you had been—if I hadn't seen that, when you thought you had a right to bear a grudge, you would bear it, I should never have warmed to you as I did; no, not even if you had been your mother's son ten times over. Oh, it is a blessed thing there are righteous laws to punish thieves and evil-doers! Why, if there had not been, that good woman, Mrs. Glynne, would have been tortured to death before this by that vile reprobate, her husband.'

'Mrs. Glynne is a widow, sir!'

'*Is* she, sir?' said the old man, testily.
'That is news to me, and perhaps before long she may have cause to feel that she is

a wife indeed ! We shall see—we shall see !' he added, half to himself, his thoughts turning into another channel.

Guy left him to himself while he was summoning up his own courage, and at last, plunging desperately into the subject, he said :

'You spoke of the loss of Miss Clare's dowry, sir ?'

'Yes, sir, I did,' said the old man, almost fiercely. 'I want her to marry well, and I don't want her to go penniless to the man she marries.'

'She is a fortune in herself,' said Guy, warmly.

'She'd be the better for a fortune *with* herself !' was the answer. 'I don't want my girl to go empty-handed to any one. But I am getting tired now. I think you had better go. I want to save my strength, and nurse my strength, for I have plenty of hard work before me. I've got to bring

the fellow who stole my papers to the gallows—and see my girl,’ he added, in a lower voice, ‘at Chalcombe.’

He sank back in his chair, and closed his eyes, as if he wished to sleep, and Guy left the room. He saw a glimmer of light from the drawing-room opposite, the door being partly open, and, knocking, heard the voice he most wished to hear, telling him to come in.

By the large bay-window sat Eunice, with the moonlight shining on her—just one lamp at a distance, too far away to give her any light by which to read or work. She had been watching the river bathed in the silvery whiteness of the moon, for the last hour, and thinking, it may be, that perhaps her prince would come and look on it. Here was her prince. He had just come from her guardian—he was holding her hand in his, and they were looking at the clouds and the loveliness of the night, together, and she

was uttering some commonplaces about Mary Ann having gone to London to see Miss Watts, and the improvement in her uncle's health, Guy—did he know it?—holding her hand all the while.

‘My uncle will be a much poorer man for this loss,’ she said presently, ‘but I wish he would not take it to heart as he does ; if he does not get those papers back, he will never be himself again.’

Guy kept her hand, still.

‘He will be a poorer man. Will that make much difference to you?’

‘No ; I am well and strong now. I can do without the luxuries that my good uncle has been so pleased to give me. It was of him I was thinking,’ said Eunice—trying, very gently however, to draw her hand away from Guy.

He only held it all the tighter, and said :

‘It was you of whom *I* was thinking—shall I tell you my thoughts?’

She looked down. The moon, though it bathed her in its soft silvery sheen, showed nothing of the blushes that were burning her cheeks. But Guy felt that she was trembling, and drew her closer to him.

‘I thought that perhaps you might be contented with a different home to that which your uncle had expected for you. He wishes to see you the mistress of Chalcombe, and your husband would have been its squire. When I first heard that, I hardly dared hope that I might ever win you ; but now that it is possible Chalcombe may never be yours at all, I think I may, at least, dare to tell you that—that—I should be the proudest, the happiest fellow in the world, if I thought there would ever be a chance of my winning you as my own. Only a chance—only a hope ! Don’t you think in time you could care for me a little ? I would work so hard to make you a home not quite unworthy of you—if I thought

that some day you would share it. Eunice, couldn't you learn to love me just a little ?

'Never,' softly yet firmly said, with a lowered head and blushes as burning as ever the moon looked on.

'*Never!*' he repeated despairingly, and dropped her hand.

'*Never,*' she said again—'*never a little.* Oh ! have you never guessed it ? Guy, I have loved you for years—but never a little. I loved you when you carried me—a poor sickly child, so weak and plain, so conscious of my unlovableness and plainness. You were the first, besides my uncle and Mrs. Glynne, who had ever seemed to think that I was worth the caring for ; and as time went on, you were always showing me kindness. Oh ! you can't think what it was to be such a "poor ugly little toad," as some people called me, and have the bravest and handsomest in the town—the

one who, twice over, had saved my uncle's life—going out of his way to help a poor little cripple like myself. Yes, you helped me, and were tender and pitiful, even when you hated my uncle, and thought you had good cause for your hatred. If I had been pretty, and bright, and winning, like other children, I should have thought nothing of it; but I had nothing—nothing to win your kindness. It was your goodness and your tenderness that did it; and so I loved you, year after year, making you my prince and my hero, praying for you every night of my life, and thinking of you every day. Oh, Guy! never ask me, after this, to love you *a little!*

With all the rapture of passion and delight tingling through Guy's veins, there was something of shame and abasement. To think that he—common humdrum Guy Thurstone—should be so idolised by this most beautiful and stately of young

maidens. For the 'ugly little toad' had grown into a very princess of girls. Even while pouring forth the abundance and fulness of her love, there had been no lowering of that sweet dignity which, somehow, seemed always to set her apart and above all other girls, like a young queen. How should he ever be worthy of such love? How should he ever justify it by becoming what she thought him?

'I am a poor fellow,' he said presently, 'to what you think me to be, but I will do my best to deserve to be so well thought of. I don't deserve such love as you have given me—no man could; but it shall not be my fault, Eunice, now you have given yourself to me, if I do not make you the happiest woman in this world.'

'Stop. I am only half won yet, Guy. I have given you my love—I could not help it; but I have not given you myself. That is for my uncle to do. I cannot leave

him desolate, and he would be very desolate, now, if I were to go. The great scheme of his life has failed. Mr. Chalcombe may yet be able to keep the lands which, in a year or two, would have become my uncle's—which should be his, I know, according to all law and equity.'

'Nothing of that will trouble Mr. Chalcombe, if he sees his way to keeping his acres, let Mr. Deane have paid what he may for them,' said Guy.

'No, we must not expect it. Mr. Chalcombe has had the full value of his lands, and unless he could have redeemed them in another year—which there was little likelihood of his doing—they would have become my uncle's. I cannot tell you how he built on this. I don't say it was right, but I do know that, as far as money goes, he has dealt justly by Mr. Chalcombe, who wanted money very sorely, and might have had harder creditors than my uncle. But

still he *has* built on Chalcombe coming to him—on ending his days there; and if this is never to be, why, the more reason I should cling to him. I cannot leave him, Guy—I cannot leave him in his old age unless his misfortune is repaired, or he learns how to bear it.'

'You mean unless he gets those papers back, and find the rascals who stole them. That's a difficult task, but I'll try and do it,' said Guy. 'I ought to try and do as much as that for Reuben Deane; he has done a great deal for me. But if I fail, Eunice?'

'I shall love you still—not *a little*, Guy,' she answered very softly.

'Yes, but love is not enough. I mean—I mean that, having so much, I want a great deal more. I want you for my wife, Eunice. I want you to share my home. I will do my best, God knows, for your uncle. I would do it, even without the

hope of winning you ; but, finding the scoundrels who stole those papers will not of itself be enough. Those deeds may be in ashes by this time, and am I to lose you because, for want of them, your uncle cannot make good his claim to Chalcombe ?

‘I cannot tell how that may be, Guy. I am not my own to give. I will never marry without his consent, and I do not think, under these altered circumstances, he will give it very easily ; neither, as I said, can I leave him till his loss is either repaired or he has learned to bear it.’

What more Guy might have said can never be told, for the cherry-cheeked waiting-maid came in at last with candles, and in another second she was followed by Mr. Theodore Rae, looking as complacent, as well-dressed, and as pleased with himself, as ever. He had come from town to learn whether Mr. Deane had heard any tidings of his paper. And then Mary Ann made her

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appearance, having come back by the same coach that had brought Mr. Ray down. Then Eunice went to stay with her uncle, and Guy took his leave, feeling that the less he saw of Mr. Theodore Rae just then the better for them both.

‘Chalcombe will come to that confounded dandy if those deeds don’t turn up, and then, just for the sake of seeing her mistress of the old place, Deane will give my girl to him. That’s if she will be given, but she won’t. Half won already, and all won in time, or I’ll know the reason why. I’ll go home—I’ll tell everything to Dick, and see if, between us, we can’t find a way out of this.’

And he walked home. The coach was not ready to start when he got to Turnham Green, and to wait, even a quarter of an hour, in this fever of the blood, this whirlwind of delight that was thrilling his frame and making his heart beat as it had never

beaten yet, was impossible. Better than riding, far, was it to pace along the lonely London road, look up at the stars as if asking them to share his ecstasy, at the moon, who had shone her sweetest at his wedding, and to repeat over and over, and a hundred times over, to himself, 'Never a little, Guy—I can never love you a little.'

CHAPTER II.

DICK'S SEARCH.

IF ever there was a true friend in this world, it was Dick Thwaites. He heard all that Guy had to tell him, with the greatest patience, and it took a very long while for Guy to tell him all about Eunice's perfections and his own unworthiness.

Dick was thoroughly sympathetic. He did not say much. It was not necessary to do so. Guy was so full of his own doubts, hopes, miseries, and happiness, that Dick, if he wanted to do so, could hardly put in a word. But he did not want ; he listened

with an appearance of the greatest interest, and, when Guy had finished, said :

‘Now, what we have to do is what we should have done before, if it had not been for the old gentleman’s illness—catch the thief.’

‘Exactly,’ said Guy. ‘If we do it, Dick, I shall be the proudest fellow in the world—and Eunice shall thank you herself. I am sure she will love you, Dick, as if you were her brother, when once she knows your value——’

‘She knows yours, Guy, and that’s more to the purpose. I shall run down to Chiswick to-morrow, the first thing, and look well about the place. Then I’ll see if I can’t hear something about our good friend Mr. Snark. I shall be close to Brentford, and I’ll hunt up the constables there, and see if they can’t give me some news about him. It wouldn’t surprise me at all, Guy, to find that he had something to do with this.’

The next morning saw Dick at the old house by the river-side. And he made a very different inspection of the place to any that Guy, or any one who was not a builder, could have done. First, he began with the closet, and sounded the floor below and the wood at the top, and then he went on the roof, which he found was of various elevations, although a low parapet wall, running from one side to the other at the back, partly concealed the fact. There was nothing over the closet, and the greater portion of Reuben Deane's room, but a large cistern, which had been built for rain water, had evidently not been used for many years, and had been covered over. Dick found his way into the cistern, taking with him, as assistant, the Irish serving-man, of whom mention has been made before. The man did not like the task, evidently. He grumbled at going up the ladder to the roof, declaring that was not his work, which was

that of 'jintleman's gardener, an' to make meself ginerally useful.'

'And you're doing it, my fine fellow,' said Dick, with the utmost cheerfulness, as he sent him up the ladder before him. 'You ought to climb well. You're not going up with the hod this time.'

The Irishman stopped when half way up the ladder, to inform Dick that he had been a gentleman's servant all his life, and had never yet demeaned himself by 'comin' down to the level of them brick-laying fellows.'

'You'll be up to the level of one when we're both on the roof,' said Dick, following him with the basket of tools which he had taken the precaution to bring with him from town; and then, most unwillingly assisted by the Irishman, Dick set to work, removed the roof from the cistern, and then began to examine the lead flooring.

'You'll be leavin' the master without a

roof to cover him,' said his unwilling coadjutor.

'I dare say I shall let daylight in—on more things than one,' said Dick, significantly.

Dick looked very carefully at the leaden flooring of the cistern. It had been removed—not so very long ago—and replaced by very unworkmanlike hands.

'Some one has been here,' he said to the Irishman, 'who didn't know his business. The fellow that last had to do with this piece of lead isn't worth his salt as a plumber—fit for nothing, I should say, but to be a "jintleman's servant," and not good for much at that.'

'What are you meanin'?' asked the other, fiercely.

'I mean,' said Dick, 'that it seems a queer thing that a faithful servant, such as you, should be at work in the garden and about the place, and not see what was

going on at the roof here. This lead has been taken up, you see, just as I am taking it up now—there, lend a hand; work away at the side there. Now we come to the joists, and good thick ones they are—whoever built this house never scamped their work—but these joists have been sawn through, and some of them taken away. Now, my good fellow, how could that have been done, and without your knowing anything about it, while you were at your work in the garden below?

‘An’ how would I see it, wid this wall between me an’ them that was afther brakin’ into the masther’s place below, wid this wall to hide their goin’s on?’ asked the other.

‘The wall wouldn’t have hidden them while they were picking away at the *top* of the cistern,’ said Dick, ‘and I take it they’d have harder work to get that off than we found; and how is it that you know anything of the master’s place being

broken into? I didn't say a word about it. Has Mr. Deane told you of his losses, and asked you to help him find the thief?

The Irishman's eyes fairly glared, and he gave one glance at the wall which had formed one side of the cistern, that was enough to show Dick that, had that wall been a little lower, he might have reached the ground in another fashion than by the ladder. He removed the joists easily enough; they were sawn ready to his hand, as he observed to the Irishman, who now made no pretence of helping.

'It must have taken some time to do this job,' he said, when he had laid the joists on one side, and came to the goodly piece of oak which formed the roof of Reuben Deane's treasure-closet, and found that too had been cut away, then carefully replaced and fastened down.

'Whoever did it set to work in the

night, most likely,' said his companion, sullenly.

'Then they must have had a fine moon-light night for the purpose,' said Dick.

No one could see them from the front of the house, along which ran three fair-sized rooms; but at the back there was, on the upper floor—as is so often the case in old houses—a great waste of space and material, so that a moderate room might have been put where there was nothing but this long-disused cistern. But how any one could have removed, first its leaden roof, and then its leaden flooring, cut away the joists beneath, and the upper surface of the cupboard, without being overheard by Reuben Deane in the room below, or perceived by his trusty man-servant in the garden at the back of the house, was a puzzle—the former especially, till Dick remembered that Mr. Deane had been laid up in London for a couple of days—time enough for cunning

hands to do their work, especially with that trusty Hibernian to help them.

‘I’ve learned quite enough now,’ he said, when he had so far replaced things that the cupboard below would be weather-tight. ‘With Mr. Deane’s leave, I’ll send down a couple of men to-morrow to make a good job of this. Londoners will do better than fellows from the neighbourhood. But what we have to do,’ and Dick bent his eyes sternly on his companion, ‘is to catch the thief and hang him at Tyburn tree, unless he tells us who set him on to take what he found in the cupboard below us.’

The Irishman turned away.

‘You’ll be a clever man if ye find him,’ he muttered.

‘He’ll be a clever man if I don’t,’ said Dick. ‘Hallo, fellow, what are you doing with the ladder?’

‘Going down it,’ was the sullen answer. ‘I’m not wanted here.’

‘I’ll go first, if you please,’ said Dick, and down he went.

When the Irishman reached the bottom, he found a constable with a pair of handcuffs in attendance. Dick had been wiser than when he went with Guy in search of Lawyer Snark, and had not come unaccompanied from London. But Jem O’Brien was obstinately mute. He knew nothing of the theft, he declared; he was a hard-working man, and had always done his duty as a gentleman’s servant. A little change passed over his face when Dick whispered to him :

‘Mr. Deane will give a thousand pounds reward if those papers are forthcoming—and ask no questions.’

Jem’s face seemed to lighten for a moment; then he shook his head.

‘Whoever took them would have burned them by this time. As for me,’ he added, as if inspired by a sudden recollection of

what propriety required at his hands, 'I'm
as innocent as the babe unborn.'

And then he marched doggedly away
with the constable.

CHAPTER III.

A FAMILY PARTY.

MRS. GLYNNE sat alone that day in the drawing-room at Bedford Row. The baby was better. She had done what she was wanted to come up from the country for, and now, though neither her son nor her daughter-in-law said as much, she knew that they could very well dispense with her longer stay with them ; so she was going on the morrow. Her boxes were packed up, her place in the coach taken, and everything had seemed ready for her departure the next morning, when her daughter-in-law, on coming down to breakfast, had said

that George had a bad cold, and if it had not been that Mrs. Glynne's place was taken, she thought she would have asked her to stay and help her nurse him.

But an hour or two in bed, and a hot posset, did such wonders for the pseudo-invalid, that Mrs. George thought herself justified in leaving him and going to Russell Square, to her mamma's, especially as Mrs. Glynne was there to keep the drawing-room fire in, and see that dear George, when he came down, did not sit in draughts. So Mrs. Glynne, who had meant to do a great many things on this her last day in town, found herself expected to stay in and take care of her son, as she had done of his baby, and to see that there was a good fire ready for him to come down to. There might have been pleasanter ways of spending the morning, but neither Mr. nor Mrs. George thought of that.

Mrs. George was good enough for the

man she had married. Like many young women with small brains, and hearts to match, she had a vague, unreasoning jealousy of everything and everybody connected with her husband before his marriage. *Her* friends, *her* relations, should suffice for both. It was not that she loved the man she had married, so very much—she had never really loved any one in the world but herself; and her father, her mother, her sisters, were only valued inasmuch as, belonging to her, there could be no people in the world like them.

But the jealousy which exists without love, which is born of sheer selfishness, is the most exacting of all. Mrs. George, having made all the use she could of her mother-in-law, was very well contented, now, that she was going, and at this very moment she was telling her own mother how glad she was that her house would

now be her own, for, with a mother-in-law in it, that never seemed the case.

Presently George Glynne came in. He had his dressing-gown on, a woollen scarf round his neck, and a silk handkerchief tied round his head. His mother could not help smiling. Then she brought an armchair near the fire, shut the door, which he had omitted to do, and asked him how he felt.

‘Better, as far as my cold is concerned,’ he said. ‘I hope they will send me my letters from the counting-house, soon. I sent John early this morning, with a message that Thurstone was to bring them.’

‘Guy! I should be glad to see him,’ said his mother, arranging a screen between George and the door.

‘Yes—I hope he will come soon—and—and—my cold is very bad, but I may as well tell you at once, mother, that it is not

merely my cold which has kept me at home to-day—somebody else may come—I hope Thurstone will be here first. By-the-bye, will you ring the bell, and tell them, when he does come, to have him shown into the dining-room. I don't want him up here with—with our other visitor,'

Mrs. Glynnne put her hand on the bell, but paused before she rang it.

'Our other visitor. Who's he, George?'

'I—I—stopped at home to prepare you, and I got Harriet out of the way. They will be sure to keep her half the day in the Square, or take her driving, or shopping, or something,' he said, confusedly. 'It would never do for her to see him. I hope she will never know that he is living. She has been brought up so very carefully. It would never do for them to meet. It's a nice thing in a young woman, and what every man likes in his wife, of course—still, it has its inconveniences.'

‘Who are you talking about, George?’ said his mother again, more sharply than before.

‘About my father, ma’am. He is coming here to-day to see you. He has written to me to the effect that the reasons which made it impossible for him to—to—to appear to be in existence in fact, no longer remain. I—I don’t know the reasons,’ said Mr. George—his mother knew from the very manner of this most respectable young man that he was telling her a lie—‘I—I—never *did* know them—I don’t wish to know them. It wouldn’t be at all desirable that I *should* do so—and the letter—not at all explicitly written—was brought me here last evening by the lout of an Irishman he used to be so fond of having about him; and he could tell me nothing—not that I asked much—there are some things it is as well not to know——’

‘And your father is coming here, George?’ said his mother, with a terrible whiteness in her face, and a terrible sternness in her tone.

‘Yes—yes—it is his wish—it is my wish!’ said Mr. George, trying hard for a little assumption of dignity, ‘that you and he should live together again. He will never keep straight if you don’t,’ he added, his dignity breaking down into something very like a whine. ‘He has only just got the better of an attack of delirium tremens. And I am afraid—very much afraid—that if you do not take charge of him, he will be coming here, and annoying Harriet—and—and—you know he is not the sort of person for a young woman like her to see.’

‘What difference is there between your wife and your mother, that the man who is not fit for the one even to see, should be fit for the other to live with?’ asked his

mother, with the same pitiless sternness as before in her tones.

‘*You are his wife, you know,*’ was the querulous answer, ‘and you could manage him now. He wants nursing, and he knows it. He’s utterly broken down, and if you were to take him away out of the country, or even down to Thorpe Leigh—I—I—should say he would be safe enough there now; it would be such a good thing for me. It’s an awful thing—it really is, for a young man in my position to have a father that—that—he can’t introduce—that—that he really can’t help feeling ashamed of.’

‘And what must it be for a wife?’

‘Oh, we’ve gone over that again and again! A wife is a man’s wife, and there’s an end of it. It’s a case of duty on your part—positive duty—and—and—here he is!’

Mr. George Glynne sprang to his feet as

the door opened, and a voice, hoarse and broken, but still familiar, said in tones that meant to be as careless and jocular as of old :

‘Mother and son—a little family party of which I come to make the third—Margaret, my dear, haven’t you a kiss or a smile for your husband, now he’s come back to you.’

She did not look at him, but turned to leave the room, without a word. He got between her and the door.

‘This won’t do, madam ! By —— ! it won’t do. It may have suited me to keep out of the way for a time. There’s no earthly reason I should keep out of the way now I can set old Deane at defiance ; and I can come back, and I mean to come back, to my old home—I mean in Thorpe Leigh—and lead a quiet, easy, peaceful life and have Jem O’Brien to wait upon me. You always disliked that man, madam—

only, I believe, because of his handsome sister—who—who—liked, poor girl, to call herself Mrs. Glynne——’

‘Father, for shame!’ said that good young man his son—‘you are forgetting yourself!’

‘Not a drawing-room story—eh, George? Well, no more it is. It’s a pity, George, you are so damned respectable; but I suppose it pays, in the city—eh? Well, I’ll conform—I’ll conform. I mean to turn over a new leaf, and be all that your mother and you could wish me. She was a handsome hussy, though. One would have thought Jem owed me a grudge for that little affair, but he never did. Faithful as a dog—faithful as a dog! Poor Jem!’ he went maundering on, as he sank into the same chair from which his pious son had just risen.

He looked older, shabbier, more wretched than before. The most utter wreck of

what had had once been known as man and gentleman that ever eye rested on. Shaking, stammering, with bleared eyes and hanging cheeks, worn dress hanging on him like rags—not a trace of the strength he had so misused, of the good looks which had won women to their undoing—feeble, broken, on the very borders of the grave, and yet chuckling over past sins, with only life enough left to gloat on the memory of bygone infamies.

‘Poor Jem! poor Jem!’ he went on; then turned sharply to Mrs. Glynne: ‘Well, madam, when shall we start? I have been long enough away from my own home. I should like to set out for it to-morrow.’

‘You will never start with me,’ she said. ‘The same house never holds us two again.’

‘Then I remain here,’ he replied. ‘I’m a family man; I mean to live with my family. I want taking care of,’ he added,

with a whine almost equal to his son's. 'I'm not so young as I was, and I should like to settle down in peace. We shall be Darby and Joan—eh, Madge?' he added, with a ghastly attempt at a laugh.

The door opened, and in came Guy Thurstone. The servants had had no orders given them to keep him elsewhere, and, as a matter of course, had shown him at once to the room in which their master was supposed to be nursing his cold. Mr. George turned pettishly on him:

'Didn't they tell you I was engaged? May I trouble you to wait below in the dining-room?'

'No—stay—Guy!' cried Mrs. Glynne, in a voice so strange and troubled that he hardly knew it for hers, and she sprang towards him, placed her two hands on his arm, and said, 'Take me away, Guy—take me away—anywhere—anywhere—away from these two men!'

She was sobbing hysterically as she spoke, her usual stately calmness quite broken down. He drew her to him as a son might draw a mother when in trouble, and said :

‘ What is it, dear madam ? What can I do for you—where shall I take you ? ’

‘ Will you step downstairs, Mr. Thurstone ? ’ said George Glynne ; ‘ or, better still, go back to the counting-house. Any letters that you have brought can wait till to-morrow. Don’t you see, sir, that you are intruding upon family matters ? ’

‘ I am at Mrs. Glynne’s service, sir,’ said Guy.

‘ And at mine, you jackanapes ! My paid clerk, whom I tell to go back to his work, and he stands here bandying words with me ! ’ cried Mr. George. Then, remembering that all this was scarcely in accordance with his usual line of conduct, he said, with something like his accustomed prim polite-

ness, 'I am a little ruffled to-day, Mr. Thurstone, and you have happened to come at rather an awkward time. That is not your fault, of course. If you will just give me my letters and go, I should feel obliged. My mother, you see, is not quite herself to-day. She will be better when we are by ourselves.'

'For God's sake, don't go!' cried Mrs. Glynne, clinging to him, in her turn, as mother might to son. 'Don't leave me! Take me with you if you go. That man there—oh, look at him!—that man there, who has ruined all my life, has come back from the hiding-place to which his crimes compelled him, and he claims me—says, being my husband, he will share my home. Oh, Guy, fancy what a home with him! And the other, George—my son—insists upon his right to do so; and yet he knows his father to be so foul, so base, so vile, that he would not let his own young wife

breathe the same air with him for an hour!’

Guy quietly placed the packet of letters he had brought for George Glynne upon the table, still keeping his arm round the weeping woman clinging to him in her need. Then he said :

‘ I had better take you to Mr. Deane’s, dear madam. You will be safe with him, and he will give you better counsel than I can. Shall I ring, that you may give the servant your directions ?’

‘ We don’t want any servants—we can’t have them here!’ cried George Glynne, stepping between Guy and the bell-rope. ‘ Are you so forgetting yourself, Mr. Thurstone—forgetting your place altogether, to be giving orders like this in your employer’s house ?’

‘ Send the young puppy away, Madge,’ said Mr. Glynne, with a leer and a chuckle even viler than his words. ‘ When you

were a young woman you did not care about lovers. Isn't it rather late in the day to take to them now ?

Guy sprang forward with uplifted arm. Not all the feebleness of the thing before him would have saved him from condign punishment, but that he cowered and shrank behind his son.

'Fight my battles for me, George ! You're as good a man as he ! I've had many a row about a woman, but never yet one about my wife. Knock him down, George ! Kn—n—n——' and he never finished the word, but fell, dumb and helpless, on the ground—stricken with longcoming paralysis. Frederick Glynne's race was so far run, that he would never swear or blaspheme more.

CHAPTER IV.

AN AWKWARD GUEST.

OF all the three who were stunned and shocked by the fall, and the ghastly sight that the staring eyes and distorted face of the prostrate wretch before them presented, Mrs. Glynne was the first to recover her composure. She wiped her eyes ; she drew herself together, as it were ; and was, to all appearance, as perfectly mistress of herself and of the situation as she had ever been at any moment of her life.

She knelt down, and took that ghastly head, to which grey locks had brought no honour, on her lap, and wiped the foam

from the lips—tenderly, gently—as if she only remembered that he had been her lover once, and was still her husband. Was it so? Did his utter weakness, indeed blot out all his foul, unworthy past, so that she could remember nothing but the brief days of their courtship and their early wedded life?

If her son had been so stricken, would she have forgotten all his goodness, his respectability, and only thought of him as the laughing baby, the bright, merry boy she had once so rejoiced in? Possibly; for she was one of those women to whom weakness and suffering appeal most forcibly, who, when fate has been too strong for the sinner, forget the sin!

George Glynne looked on, frightened. Was his father dead? and, if so, would there be a coroner's inquest? and would Thurstone tell every one that this *was* his father? Must it come out at the inquest?

And what would his wife and his wife's relations say ?

‘What—what—shall we do with him?’ he asked, turning to his mother for guidance.

‘Shall I go for a doctor, madam?’ asked Guy.

She nodded acquiescence, and Guy was off in an instant.

Then she said to Mr. George :

‘You must ring the bell, and desire your servants to prepare a bed on this floor at once. The back drawing-room will do.’

‘But—I—I—thought—are you sure—do you think he will want it?’ stammered George, who began to feel that fate might have worse things in store for him than a coroner’s inquest.

‘He is not dead,’ she said, with a bitter smile ; for she read the heart of her well-conducted son. Truly, they were two men for a woman to glory in as belonging to her !

‘It is a paralytic stroke. I have seen such before. But it will be impossible to take him upstairs to the usual spare bedroom—quite out of the question for him to be carried out of the house.’

‘But—but—I don’t know what Harriet will say—and she won’t like giving up the drawing-room—and what will her family think?’ stammered Mr. George.

‘You seem to know enough of the duty of a wife—you should be able to impress it on Harriet—and you have talked enough to me of my duty to your father, here. Well, practise yours. It’s clear enough. Or do you think you will do it better by sending him to the workhouse—if, indeed, you can induce them to receive the father of such a well-to-do man as Mr. George Glynne.’

George Glynne remained as if stupefied, while his mother did what she could for the wretched thing who called her wife.

In two minutes more the doctor came.

Guy had caught him at home, and dragged him off with him, giving him all needful explanations by the way. He was not very anxious about Mr. Glynne--indeed he thought, from what little he had seen of that gentleman, that it would not be a bad thing for the world in general if he were taken out of it—but he wished to get back to Mrs. Glynne, and therefore he hurried the doctor along at a pace which he, being stout and elderly, found slightly trying.

Panting and breathless as was the doctor when he arrived at the drawing-room in Bedford Row, he knew his work when he saw it before him. He asked two or three questions, and then, to the horror of Mr. George Glynne, it was discovered that the good man was rather deaf, so that Guy had to repeat Mr. George's answers.

‘Why did you bring him here? Why didn't you get my own doctor? He is

only in Gower Street,' muttered that miserable man.

'Fetched the nearest,' said Guy, bluntly. 'Being your father, sir, I thought that would meet your wishes.'

'Paralytic stroke,' said the doctor. Then he looked around him—the contrast between the shabby gentility of the stricken man, and the handsome plenishing of the room, and the refined stateliness of the lady attending to the sufferer, struck him. 'He doesn't live here, I suppose?' he said, interrogatively.

'No—no—no!' shouted Mr. George, at the top of his lungs. 'I suppose he can be moved, doctor?'

The doctor looked puzzled; Mrs. Glynne came to his rescue.

'Ask him, Guy, whether he can be moved into the next room, or carried upstairs. Tell him that his patient is my husband, and the father of the master of the house.'

And this Guy repeated so faithfully to the doctor, that the servants who, with the instinct of their class, had detected that there was something unusual going on, heard it all perfectly on the landing outside, where they were assembled.

The doctor seemed to have quite as clear a view of the duties of a son, as Mr. George Glynne had shown that he possessed of those of a wife, for he said, quite cheerfully :

‘It is most fortunate that he is, in a manner, at home. It would not be safe to remove him. He might be carried upstairs, if we have help enough to do it.’

‘Three men in the place at your service, doctor,’ said Guy, who felt a laudable desire to carry out the doctor’s directions, guessing that they did not meet with the views of that best of sons, his employer—‘Mr. George Glynne, his footman, and myself.’

‘ Ring the bell, Guy, and I will give directions,’ said Mrs. Glynne.

Guy rang it promptly, and the directions were given. Mr. George Glynne felt himself shrinking into utter insignificance. Master of the house indeed ! His mother seemed mistress of the house, and of the situation too. The servants obeyed her orders, and the *best* spare bedroom—Mrs. George had thought the second-best good enough for her mother-in-law — was prepared for Mr. George’s father, with all the promptitude that the case demanded.

Then, under the superintendence of the doctor, the stricken man was carried upstairs, and, with the help of a nurse whom the doctor had taken it upon himself to send for, was put to bed.

Mr. George having assisted in carrying the patient upstairs, came down to his mother in the drawing-room. He felt as if he could speak out a little, now ; there was

no doctor or Guy Thurstone to protect her. They were both assisting the nurse, upstairs. Mr. George Glynne was a valiant man when he had only the defenceless to deal with.

‘I don’t know what Harriet will say to this, nor what her friends will think,’ he observed. ‘It is a dreadful scandal and disgrace; he is such a man, you know, to have in one’s house.’

‘That is why I did not want to have him in *mine*,’ said his mother; ‘being in yours, you have to do your duty by him—your duty as a son to his father. Has it never occurred to you that there are other duties in the world than just those a wife owes to her husband?’

‘Oh, I’ll pay anything—the rent of lodgings, the doctor’s bill, whatever you want in the way of money—but to have him here—with Harriet—why, when he comes to his senses and begins to talk——’

‘I know. You would have mine the only ears he should pollute ; but I doubt if he will ever talk again. Still, I wonder George, you, of all men, should forget that there is such a thing as common decency, and *that* would hardly allow you to send your father, at the risk of his life, to lodgings. Once more, do your duty, and I’ll do mine. Let him stay here till things turn, and, with the help of the nurse, I will watch over him. Harriet shall have no trouble, and need never enter his room.’

‘Illness in a house makes trouble; but of course he must stay now,’ said Mr. George, ruefully ; ‘but I don’t know what Harriet will say.’

Harriet had a very great deal to say when she came home, but she had no opportunity of saying it to Mrs. Glynne, as that lady was in the invalid’s chamber. Mr. George had to bear all the brunt of the storm, and then Harriet went back to

Russell Square with her nurse and her baby, and remained there all night.

In the morning her papa came to Bedford Row, and had a long talk with his son-in-law, and an explanation which he appeared to consider satisfactory. For Mr. George was not a son-in-law to be quarrelled with. He was so good a man of business, so correct in morals and behaviour, that, even if he had a black sheep belonging to him, in the shape of a father who would go on living when every one believed him dead, something ought to be forgiven him.

The old gentleman shook hands very heartily with Mr. George when he went away.

‘Go round to our place and make it all right—a kiss and a bit of a scolding—eh, George? And you must get him away as soon as you can. Your mother must take him down to Thorpe Leigh. She won’t have much trouble with him, now. He’ll

be quiet enough after this breakdown.'

Mr. George went round to Russell Square, and there he found his mother-in-law, who was a different woman altogether to his wife's. She gave him a scolding for the deception he had practised, and then she lectured Harriet, and told her she must make the best of things now she was married, and so left the room, and the young people in it to make up matters as they could.

George tried the kiss, but his wife would not receive it ; as to the scolding, *that* was given by her. But she went home with him in her mamma's carriage, along with the nurse and the baby ; for her mother had told her very plainly that, having married she must make the best of matters, and her home was in Bedford Row, and not in Russell Square.

The baby had had a little to do with this,

for it had cried all night, and Mr. George's sisters did not want her at Russell Square. She might be ill-used, but home was the best place for people with grievances. And so Mr. and Mrs. George went back to Bedford Row, and made up their quarrel, after a fashion.

CHAPTER V.

JEM O'BRIEN IN TROUBLE.

IN a first floor room of an old house in Hammersmith Mall sat Lawyer Snark at breakfast. It was a beautiful winter's morning, and the river was in perfection. There had been a heavy fall of snow, the evening before, and it lay drifted into masses on the river-bank, or floated gently down the river on the broken sheets of ice, which sometimes seemed as if another hour of frost would weld them together, so that the river might be crossed without the aid of boat or bridge. On the Barnes side, opposite his window, the trees shone in the

sunlight, fair and white, with the snow crystallising their branches, and all the ground beneath them powdered over. There were no factories near enough to poison the air, at that time—no snorting steam-tugs labouring and panting like giants grumbling at the work they had to do—and doing it all the same—so that, a few more days of such frost, and there might well be another fair held on the Thames, and another ox roasted whole, for people to eat of, that they might tell their grandchildren what they had done.

All this had been but a few winters back, but Lawyer Snark, though he had been in London at the time, and visited the fair, did not trouble himself about it now, nor about the weird, white beauty of the scene before him. He was out of temper, first that his breakfast was late, and next that the post was not in; and he felt inclined to be out of temper with the

weather, for, if it had not been for the frost and the snow, doubtless the mail would have been in time, and he might have been reading his letters while sipping his tea.

Lawyer Snark had thought it wisest to leave Brentford when he found his young friends from Thorpe Leigh had discovered his whereabouts. But it had not suited him to go very far from Mr. Deane, or that trusty man-servant of his, so he had shifted his quarters to furnished apartments at Hammersmith Mall ; and, having taken the name of Forbes, instead of that of Brown, which he had borne since his departure from Thorpe Leigh, waited there the result of the various little plans which he had in progress.

He was a rogue, but he had not been a prosperous one, as people imagined. His practice had not brought him in half so much as it had been said to do, so that

when he left Thorpe Leigh he had not so very much to take with him besides the money Mrs. Thwaites had entrusted him with. And the greater part of this being in notes, the numbers of which the bank that paid them over had, of course, kept an account of, he had not been able to turn them into cash, as he had contemplated. It was a little oversight for so clever a man not to have done so before he took his departure from Thorpe Leigh; but he had only thought at the time of the easiest way of carrying off his booty—it had not occurred to him till too late that, thanks to the manner in which bank accounts are kept, any one of these notes, which were of £100 each, might, if he tried to pass them, lead to his detection, and his incarceration in a place by no means so pleasant as Hammersmith Mall.

The letters came at last, and the first Lawyer Snark opened was in a strange

hand, and bore a London post-mark. When he had read it, he gave vent to an oath or two before he went on to his other correspondence. That letter informed him that Jem O'Brien was in Clerkenwell gaol, on suspicion of robbery of Mr. Deane's papers. The sender of the letter declared himself to be as innocent of the offence as the babe unborn; but, as the writer of the epistle was the chaplain of the prison, such declaration may be taken as merely *pro formâ*.

Jem wished to consult Mr. Snark about his defence, and would be glad to see him if he would come to the prison that day, when he would be allowed to do so, between twelve and two.

'The confounded fool, to let himself be taken!' said Mr. Snark, when he had read the letter through. 'I told him he ought to get away, but he would keep hanging around—not to lose sight of his old master,' he said. 'What made him so fond of the

wretched old dandy? Or was he fond? Sometimes it seemed to me to be more like the other thing.'

But Lawyer Snark made up his mind to go and see Jem O'Brien in prison, and he performed a very careful toilet before he started, muffling himself up in a comforter, and pulling his hat down over his eyes. He had shaved off his reddish-brown whiskers—those whiskers which had so charmed Mrs. Thwaites. He had felt tolerably safe before his adventure a few nights back, but now he was half-afraid of venturing in the streets of London, lest he should meet one or other of his young acquaintances.

There is one advantage in visiting a friend in prison—there is no fear of finding him out when you call. Jem O'Brien was at home, and very glad to see Lawyer Snark, or Mr. Forbes, as he called himself to the prison authorities. He looked more

ruffianly, because more desperate, than ever.

‘Do ye think I’ll get over it?’ he asked, when he recounted how bail had been refused, ‘though I offered him your own—a respectable jintleman living on his means at The Mall, Hammersmith—a jintale address, if ever there was one,’ said Jem.

‘And whatever made you do that?’ said Mr. Snark, sharply; ‘don’t you know that I’ve my own reasons for keeping quiet?’

‘An’ keepin’ your temper too,’ said Jem, significantly. ‘Suppose, now, I’d told them just a little more—told them that I should never have thought of going up to the top of a house to look for the door of a cupboard, if you hadn’t set me on to it yourself by tellin’ me what a snug hiding-place your friend, who died there, had for his will and his money; an’ nobody knowin’ of it but yourself an’ him. That day I

watched the old master and young Mr. Thurstone up in the room from the mulberry-tree, where I had gone, quite innocent like, to get fruit for Miss Eunice—should I ever have thout what took them there if it hadn't been for you? You've been a bad man to me, Lawyer Snark. No wonder Thorpe Leigh wouldn't hold ye. You've tempted me into wrong-doin', an' see what's come of it.'

'You've tempted yourself, you scoundrel!' said the lawyer, angrily. 'Did I set you on, four years ago, to throttle the old man to death for the sake of getting his pocket-book? As if it was likely,' said the wilier villain, looking down upon the burly ruffian by his side with the contempt that craft always feels for sheer brute force—'As if it was likely that he would carry such papers as those you wanted, about with him. But you're such a fool, Jem

O'Brien ; if you weren't, you wouldn't be laid here by the heels.'

'Well, I'm not so clever as you, Lawyer Snark,' said Jem, meekly ; 'there's only one who is, to my thinkin' ; an' even he might larn a lesson from you—it's the jintleman in black, below, I'm manin'. But about they papers, an' about what I wanted them for,' he added sharply, 'I'm not goin' to be disappointed of *that*, 'specially now I've risked my neck for 'em ; an' it's asy I'd die if Mr. Glynne was swingin' at the other end of the rope,' he added, with a concentrated bitterness which made the lawyer stare.

What was the use of hating any one as Jem O'Brien evidently hated his former master ?

'You'll get some money out of his wife, perhaps, for those papers,' Mr. Snark said presently, 'or maybe his son ; they won't

like the disgrace. But what would be the good to you if you did hang him ?

‘I’ve risked my sowl to do it,’ said Jem O’Brien. ‘I’ll never be able, else, to pay that villain back for the wrongs he did my sister.’

‘I don’t know about the risk to your soul, as far as this little matter is concerned ; it wouldn’t make much difference one way or another,’ said the lawyer, coolly. ‘But what’s this about your sister ? If you want me to help you, you must tell me *everything*—not leave me to find out things for myself. Now, once more, what’s this about your sister ?’

‘She was the purtiest girl you ever set eyes on,’ said the other, his sullen face softening as he spoke, ‘and in service at a place some miles from where I was living then with Mr. Glynne. He’d taken a shooting-box. She’d never seen him, to know him for my master ! but he came

across her, an' she took his fancy. He got her to believe he was a single man, an' afraid of his family findin' out if he married; an' she promised never to let on, even to me. She went away with him, and was married, as she thought; and I found her, a year after, dyin' with her baby, in a garret. He'd deserted her, and told her to go on the town for a livin'—she was no wife of his, an' had no claim on him. Well, her pride kept her from that. She was good, my Mary! good as gold, but for that villain. Well, I swore, when I buried her an' her baby, I'd be revenged; an' I've kept my word. He's been goin' down the hill steadily ever since—maybe I've helped him on the way—but I haven't cleared the reckonin' for Mary yet.'

'And how did you mean to do it?' asked Lawyer Snark, looking at the man as a curious specimen of human nature. He should have got Mr. Glynne to have

paid him handsomely for the injury to his sister—he was entitled to heavy damages in such a case; failing that, if he could have done it safely, he would have been justified in breaking every bone in Mr. Glynne's body. But to brood over his wrongs like this—to nurse their memory year by year, and wait till the full measure of his revenge should be complete, was something the lawyer could not understand. I do not know whether it arose from the fact that he was a better or a worse man than the ruffian before him, but the said ruffian was incomprehensible to Lawyer Snark.

'Through them bits o' paper,' said the other. 'He let out all about 'em when he had been drinkin'. He'd written another man's name for his own, and they called it forgery. Mr. Deane's name it was, and Mr. Deane kept the papers, so that my fine master didn't dare show his face—made his own wife believe he was dead, for

a time—she hadn't much reason to wish him alive, anyhow. Well, I wanted them papers—I thought if I got 'em I'd have Mr. Glynne under *my* thumb—and he'd have found the weight of it more than he could carry. I'd no spite against old Mr. Deane when I waylaid him at Thorpe Leigh, but I made sure he'd have them about him; I've got them now—at least you have, Lawyer Snark—an' I'll die asy if you'll tell me how I can settle accounts about Mary with the drunken villain.'

'If he's got any money you may squeeze it out of him; or you may prosecute, if you once get out of this.'

'An' what about those other papers?—there was a big pile of 'em. You told me to take all I could find, and I should most likely get those I wanted,' said the Irishman, again watching his companion keenly.

'If you hadn't been fool enough to get yourself taken, you might have shared the

reward—a hundred or two—which I suppose Mr. Deane will be offering,' was the answer. 'As things are, I really hardly know how to advise you.'

'He'll be after offering a reward,' said the other, quickly. 'Now, I tell you what to do, Mr. Snark. Go to him, and tell him he shall have his papers back without a penny. What for would I take his dirty money? If only he'll set the law on Mr. Glynne, he may do what he likes with me. I'll take my chance. Don't you think—don't you think, Lawyer Snark,' he added, looking at him with a ravenous yearning for revenge in his eye, 'that *that's* a good bargain? He shall have all his papers back—if there's bank-notes among 'em, no matter, so long as he'll set the law on Mr. Glynne. I'd die happy, I would, if I could see him hung!'

'I must think about it,' said the other, cautiously.

‘An’ remember ’twas I got the papers. You’ve no right to do anything with ’em without my consint. I got ’em, an’ you’re not to let one of ’em go without makin’ that bargain. I got ’em, you know, Lawyer Snark.’

‘Yes, you got them, my good fellow. I wouldn’t deny that for a moment—and I’ll make the best bargain I can for you,’ said Lawyer Snark, who was quite ready to give Jem O’Brien the credit of getting all the papers ; but what more he might have said was not known, for the turnkey came to inform him he had stayed his full time, and must go ; and so Lawyer Snark made his way out of the prison, and found himself in the cold winter air.

CHAPTER VI.

JEM'S BARGAIN.

IF Jem O'Brien had been able to read, the chances are that he would never have taken his master's old acquaintance into his confidence. But Jem wanted those papers, of which he had heard his master rave in his drunken fits, and he wanted some one to tell him what they were worth. Therefore he had paid a visit to the lawyer's quarters at Brentford, and sounded him, as he thought, very cautiously, and been sounded in his turn.

Tim knew enough of Lawyer Snark, from his master, to know that he was not

one to stick at trifles, and the compact between them was soon made. He was to get the papers, if possible—all he could, belonging to Reuben Deane—the lawyer's knowledge of the hiding-place in the old house stood him in good stead now; and when the papers were brought, he would tell him what had better be done with them.

Lawyer Snark had a good harvest in those papers; they ought to bring him in one at least, he thought. It was a very fortunate thing that Jem had been content to leave them in his charge till 'he could see what to make of them.' Jem had thought so himself, when being searched at the prison. But there was no time to be lost in making his harvest, if he wanted to gather it himself. He would see Mrs. Glynne that very night, and learn what price she would pay for her husband's safety. He had at first thought of George Glynne, but, on

second thoughts, preferred dealing with a woman. They were easily managed when their hearts were in question, thought the lawyer, remembering Mrs. Thwaites and others of the same genus.

But when he inquired at Bedford Row for Mrs. Glynne, he found that she and Mr. Glynne—the old gentleman, the footman put it—had gone down, two days ago, to Thorpe Leigh. Mr. Glynne was better—‘doing wonderfully well, the doctor thought, considering;’ and it was then that the lawyer first heard of his illness. Mr. and Mrs. George were both out, so the footman had time for a gossip, and indulged in it accordingly. And from the story that he heard, Mr. Snark drew his own conclusions.

Mrs. Glynne had forgiven her husband, that was clear. ‘They all do it,’ said Mr. Snark. ‘She’ll give anything, now she’s got him, that he shan’t be taken away

again. If she hasn't the money herself, she'll get it from her son ; and Mr. George Glynne would pay a good deal sooner than have his father hung.'

Lawyer Snark spent half the night in thinking matters over. Then he decided on starting for Thorpe Leigh the next morning. It was a bold thing to do, but he resolved to do it. He had bought a wig of a different colour to his own hair, and with that and the loss of his whiskers, and the help of many mufflers, he thought he should be safe—more especially as he did not intend to be seen out by daylight. There was a little public-house in the neighbourhood of the town, where he thought he should be safe. He had saved the landlord's neck when it was in jeopardy for sheep-stealing, but he did not trust to his gratitude alone. 'There are two of us to tell tales, if it comes to that,' thought Mr. Snark.

He travelled that day by the coach ; then he slept on the road, having a good supper and a comfortable bed. He had decided on posting the remainder of the journey. It would cost him something, but he thought he should be well reimbursed for the outlay. He had other documents with him besides those connected with that miserable Frederick Glynne, and the Squire of Chalcombe Hall ought to give something to have the title-deeds of his estate in his own hands again. And he would be much safer in a post-chaise than in a stage coach, where, at any moment, now he was nearing Thorpe Leigh, he might meet with an old acquaintance.

He had decided on starting about eleven o'clock, so that he should reach the Wool-sack about four, which would be twilight—the days being short now. He would pay the post-boy, slip into the little public-house—it would be too soon for the farm

labourers who frequented it to be loitering round the doors, and he should have time to make all the arrangements necessary for his privacy and comfort before they came.

Having settled everything, so far, in his own mind, Lawyer Snark felt that the best thing he could do was to turn over and sleep the sleep of the just—a sleep which, be it said, has much more to do with the digestion than with the conscience.

But the sleep this good man coveted did not come to him. He tossed and turned from side to side, but there was no sleep possible. His throat was sore, his head burning, and at last he fell off into broken slumbers and troubled dreams, only to wake in the morning with a violent headache, an aching in all his limbs, and every symptom of a severe feverish cold.

He rang the bell, and had some tea brought him ; but his throat was so sore, he

could hardly swallow a mouthful. Getting up was out of the question. He must have caught cold on the way down, or the bed must have been damp, or the severe weather must have been too much for him ; somehow, or some way, he was laid up, and found it impossible to proceed on his journey. He must give in till he was better.

He was not well enough to proceed on his journey for a week. At the end of that time he started, well wrapped up, in a post-chaise ; and he paid the driver and dismissed him when they were about a mile from the Woolsack. On consideration, he had thought it better to do this than to drive right up to the little inn. He had but a small carpet-bag to carry, and, though not quite in his usual health, he felt that he could manage that.

It was a lonely road which he had now to walk ; hedges and fields on either side, and not a house in sight till a sharp bend

of the road would bring him, as he knew, within sight of the Woolsack. But, to give this honest man his due, he was no coward physically ; and, though the darkness was drawing on apace, he had little fear of being molested—no, not even when, turning the road, he saw a shabby slouching figure, with a large stick and a small parcel, trudging heavily along. Lawyer Snark had a good stout stick too, and knew how to use it if need were ; and there was the Woolsack in the distance, with the bright light on either side its door shining over the frozen road, and the hedges all white with the last night's crystallised snow.

Something in the gait of the figure before him struck Mr. Snark as familiar. The man walked as Jem O'Brien might walk, but Jem was safe enough in Clerkenwell, which was all the better for the furtherance of the various little schemes Mr. Snark had on foot. The wayfarer was

on one side of the road, our worthy friend on the other; which Mr. Snark thought was just as well; but presently the man turned, started, and crossed the road at a pace which made the lawyer grasp his stick a little tighter.

‘An’ it’s yerself!’ said the man, in a voice which was unmistakably that of Jem O’Brien; indeed there was quite light enough for the other to see and recognise his acquaintance. ‘You didn’t expect to see me now, for certain, Lawyer Snark.’

‘Well—I—I didn’t,’ said the other, aghast with the unpleasant surprise. ‘They’ve never let you out on bail, surely?’

‘Yes, they have—leg-bail, and I gave it myself,’ was the answer. ‘I broke prizen—smashed a warder’s skull, and nearly lamed myself, but I’ve *done it*, and I hope I’m in time. I’d like to see that fellow’s face when you show him the papers, and tell him what we’re going to do.’

‘You—you’ve broken prison! Why, that’s a worse offence than housebreaking,’ cried Mr. Snark, who did not at all like his disreputable companion.

‘An’ it’s worse than setting another fellow on to do what you’re afraid to do yourself,’ said the other, with a sneer. ‘But I’m out! I knocked the warder down when he brought me my skilly—an’ I slipped out.’

‘And—and—I don’t want to hear any more!’ cried Mr. Snark. ‘Why, you’ve done enough to set every constable in the kingdom after you—it was the maddest, the most foolish thing——’

‘No it wasn’t—there never was a neater job;’ and Jem proceeded to recount his exploit. ‘I’d seen, when we were exercisin’, that they’d a ladder near my cell—they were repairin’ the wall an’ the bars of a window. So when I’d got out of my cell—a wrench to that broken bar, an’ I was down

the ladder and in the yard ; an' you may be sure it didn't take me long to get out of it.'

By this time they were at the door of the Woolsack, but Mr. Snark shrank from entering it with his companion. 'Go in now,' was the encouraging remark. 'I am not at all ashamed to be seen with you.'

'Well—I—I think we had better not be seen together,' said Lawyer Snark—'it's safest ; and if you could avoid coming in at all, Jem—I know there's an outhouse.'

'To the divel wid you and your outhouse !' was the answer. 'I've money to pay for all I want. I went to a friend at St. Giles's and borrowed it, and he gave me this coat for my own—it's a different cut altogether, you see, and they won't have the *Hue and Cry* here already. It's only three nights since I left London, so I'm safe till I've finished the work I have in hand.'

‘And what’s that?’

‘Get you to give me back thim papers—I don’t mean old Mr. Deane’s, you may keep them for putting me in the way of finding the others. Give me back the others—I want my own price for *them*!’

By this time the landlord of the Wool-sack had come out, and Mr. Snark thought it best to ask for a private room at once. Jem was getting excited and restless, and what he had to say had better be heard indoors. The landlord ushered him into a small sanded parlour with Windsor chairs, and a round table in the centre. There was a good fire, which was something; and, as he stirred it into a brighter blaze, he said in a low tone:

‘Glad to see you, sir, but hardly thought you’d show your face in this part of the country so soon.’

‘Got a little business to do, which will take me up a day or two. I know you

can accommodate me; I'm not too hard to please, and I'm willing to pay for the accommodation; and I know, too, you can keep a quiet tongue, and I'm willing to pay for *that* also.'

The host nodded complacently. Jem came forward, flung himself into the arm-chair by the fire, put his feet on the fender, and said he was famished.

'Bring him something to eat and drink, and a glass of hot brandy-and-water for me,' said Mr. Snark to the host. Then, in a lower tone, 'He's got into a scrape, and wants me to get him out of it.'

'Couldn't come to a better man,' said the host, who had clearly not forgotten the good service his guest had once rendered him, and went away to execute his orders.

Mr. Snark considered it best to wait till Jem had satisfied his hunger, when he thought he might be in a more placable frame of mind. Jem certainly appeared to

be, as he said, famished, by the ravenous way he ate. Mr. Snark sipped his brandy-and-water, and looked on, as if he was watching a wolf feed. At last Jem had done, and then the other said :

‘ And now, about your price. What do you mean to ask for those papers ?’

‘ I’ll let you know,’ said the other, cunningly, ‘ when the time comes. Give me the papers—in my own hand—at once ; if not——’

‘ There’s no need to threaten ; you shall have them,’ said the other, who felt that at any cost he must keep Jem quiet. ‘ But I think, if only for the advice I’ve given you as to the value of these papers, I ought to have a share of whatever money you make of them ; and you had better leave it to me to make the bargain for you.’

‘ I’ll make my own bargain, and ask my own price,’ was the answer ; ‘ but I tell you this—just give me the papers—read them

over to me, so that I may know them by heart, and seem as if I could read them myself; and half the money, whatever it is, I get from Mrs. Glynne, you shall have. She's got him with her. I found it all out—at least, my friend did for me—before I left London. She's got him, and I suppose she'll pay for keeping him.'

'You ought to get five hundred—a thousand—if you part with the papers,' said Mr. Snark, who was glad to see that Jem was in so reasonable a frame of mind, and had apparently given up those insane ideas of bringing his master to the gallows, which had been haunting him. 'Mr. George Glynne *can* pay, you know.'

'I know—I know,' said the other. 'We'll make the best bargain we can, and half of whatever money I get you shall have, Lawyer Snark.'

CHAPTER VII.

JEM'S BARGAIN KEPT.

Mrs. GLYNNE was alone in her usual sitting-room. She looked worn and anxious—a different woman, altogether, to the still handsome, stately matron whose beauty had made her daughter-in-law's commonplace good looks shrink into insignificance. She looked like one upon whom a great burthen had been laid, who was resolved to bear it, but felt the burthen none the less. I suppose the martyr feels the fire, even while his hymns of praise are ascending through the flames. The task may tax our strength to the utmost, let us make up our

mind as firmly as we will to do it. Fate, or life, or circumstance—call it what you will—had been too strong for her. She had said that the man she had married should be as dead to her ; that never again should one roof cover them, or house hold them ; and here he was—in his place as her husband—a sharer of the quiet home which rest and peace had made so dear to her.

There came a knock at the door, and her maidsaid that two men—strangers—wished to see her. The first thought of her mistress was to send out to inquire their business ; her next, that it might be they would tell it to no one but herself. It might be something concerning her husband—she must expect such interruptions, now. It seemed as if, now, there would be no knowing, at any time, what might take place. The look of her visitors was not calculated to reassure her. The first bowed

and took off his hat ; the other did the same, but with a little awkwardness. A second look, and Mrs. Glynne said :

‘ Jem O’Brien ! What brings you here ? Your former master has no more horses for you to groom—no more races for you to ride.’

‘ I suppose not, ma’am, but I have a little matter of business to settle, if I could be after seein’ him.’

‘ You asked for me, I thought,’ she said, coldly.

‘ It was the gentleman here did that. I’d rather have seen the master at once.’

Mr. Snark came forward.

‘ I thought it would be better, madam. I see you remember me. I have come back to settle some matters of business on my own account, and to remove, I hope, the unfavourable impression which my hurried departure from Thorpe Leigh, some time back, may have caused. But I came here

to-night on *your* account. I hoped to spare you some annoyance—some vexation——’

‘Will you speak out, if you please, and let me know at once why you did come?’

‘I’d rather speak out to the master himself,’ said Jem, uneasily. ‘It’s awkward dealing with a lady.’

‘Speak out to me, Jem. You must remember that when I was your mistress I had awkward things enough to deal with. Why have you come?’

‘What is the use of my telling you?’ said the fellow, shamefacedly. ‘What is the good of letting a woman know I want to hang her husband. It’s *him* I want to tell it to,’ he added, warming up. ‘I’ve a debt to pay, and I want to tell him I mean to pay it. No—you needn’t be nudgin’ and whisperin’,” he said, turning to Mr. Snark. ‘’Tisn’t money will make me let him off. ’Tisn’t money will make me give

up his paying the debt he owes me for my Mary.'

'Your sister? Yes, I've heard of her,' said Mrs. Glynne. 'It has been a wonder to me you could keep in Mr. Glynne's service after her death.'

'I looked for something better than my wages, ma'am. I had something to wait for, and I waited. I've got it at last. I've the papers he forged in my own hands, and they'll hang him. There's no gettin' over it. Only let me see him—let me see him crouchin' an' beggin' at my feet, as Mary told me she had crouched and begged at his when askin' him to make an honest woman of her!'

A knock sounded which brought a faint flush into Mrs. Glynne's cheek. That knock was a familiar one enough at her door, though it was the first time she had heard it since her return. Jem started to his feet.

‘There he is! The very gentleman I sent for! The justice of the peace I’m goin’ to lay my information before. That lad at the Woolsack has earned the six-pence I gave him to tell the Parson I’d be here, and glad to see him upon business. Oh! you’re a clever man, Lawyer Snark! but you’re not the only clever man in the world.’

‘I’ll give in to you as being the biggest fool I ever met with in it,’ was the answer. ‘What did you bring me here for, if you were only bent on throwing away your chance of a thousand pounds?’

‘I’d got to get the papers out of your hands, lawyer dear!’ was the mocking answer; ‘and then, as you seemed to want to come, I couldn’t find it in my heart to disappoint ye.’

‘As the portly form of Parson Penroyd entered the room, Mr. Snark seemed to collapse into nothingness. He shrank away

into the shadow of the curtains. Mrs. Glynn went up to her neighbour as to an old friend. She understood what was in the Parson's heart better, perhaps, than he understood it himself. He had hoped that he might take her to the Vicarage as its mistress—that a good husband in the autumn of her days might make up to her for all she had suffered in her early time at the hands of a bad one. And he was sore and hurt that, though she had never suffered him to say a word of love, he had been led into loving her while this other man was living. She must let him know how things had been with her, some day, for she could not afford to lose a friend—less now than ever.

‘I am glad you have come,’ she said, holding out her hand; ‘I wanted you very much.’

‘And I wanted you as well, sir,’ said Jem O'Brien, coming forward and standing

erect, with one hand on the table—a mien full of a set purpose, from which nothing should turn him. ‘I have to tell you that there is a forger here—in this very house—and I have the papers that he forged, with me. You’ll have to summons Mr. Deane as a witness; it’s his name that’s on them. He’s tried to screen the villain for the sake of them belongin’ to him, but he won’t swear away his own soul for him. I call on you, sir, to have him took in charge—this gentleman here is witness that I do so. You see, your comin’ here was of some use, after all, lawyer dear! Here’s the papers; you may look at ’em, but they don’t leave my hands till I’m in the witness-box, an’ give ’em up to the judge.’ He produced the papers as he spoke, but held them tightly. ‘I wish you’d send for him,’ he added; ‘a man should hear what another has to say against him. Tell the lady here to bring him forward. It’s Mr. Glynne

I'm wantin'—my old master, who wronged my sister, an' left her an' her baby to die. Why don't you tell him to come, ma'am? Or, if he isn't quite well enough to be walkin', we'll go to him.'

Parson Penroyd looked at Mrs. Glynne in puzzled wonder.

'It's all true,' she said quietly. 'My husband forged those papers; then got up a report of his own death. I believed that report. He behaved very cruelly to Mary O'Brien: it was his nature. He could not be otherwise than cruel to any woman who trusted him. Her brother may well seek for vengeance. If he likes, I will take both you and him to the man upon whom he wishes to wreak it. He is only in the next room.'

Jem O'Brien seemed to thrill with fresh life.

'If I'd known that, I wouldn't have stayed talking here so long.' He looked

at the folding-doors between the rooms. 'May be he's heard every word we've been sayin'. Perhaps he's made off.'

'No ; you will find him here,' she said, and moved towards the folding-doors.

The three men followed her, as she threw them open and went into the adjoining room. It was furnished as a bed-chamber. A middle-aged woman, who had travelled down from London with Mrs. Glynne—a nurse unmistakably—stood behind an easy-chair placed by the fire, in which reposed, with half-closed eyes, a man with a drawn white face and whiter hair, thin fingers feebly resting on the blanket that covered his body and lower limbs. He opened his eyes as Mrs. Glynne came into the room, and then was seen the vacuous, wandering look of imbecility. He did not recognise his visitors, but, when his wife went to him and placed her hand on his, a

distorted smile came over his face, and his eyes brightened a little.

‘Maggie!’

It had been her pet name when a girl—the name she had heard from her lover, from her husband in the earlier days of their married life, and never since till now. He put out one hand feebly—the other he would never be able to move again—and tried to stroke the hand his wife held to him.

‘Paralysed!’ murmured Mr. Snark, faintly.

‘For life,’ said Mrs. Glynne, firmly. ‘There is no prospect that the brain will ever act again. He will never be able to speak two words of sense. He cannot plead “Not guilty,” if he would,’ she added, turning to Jem O’Brien.

Jem looked at his old master intently. The florid face, the coarse, haughty look, the bold defiant eyes, had all gone, now.

This was a white-haired idiot, broken down and utterly helpless, upon whom he was looking. He would never utter taunt or oath again—he had sinned his last sin, uttered his last foulness. He was inoffensive as a baby, and as helpless.

‘Do you know me, master?’ said Jem, presently.

There was no answer.

‘I doubt if he hears you,’ said Mrs. Glynne. ‘He seems to know no voice but mine. Frederick, this is your old servant, Jem O’Brien. He has an account he wishes to settle with you.’

The dead white fingers went on stroking hers, but there was no other response.

Parson Penroyd went up to him.

‘We are old acquaintances, Mr. Glynne; don’t you remember me?’

He heard nothing. It was evident that, to that dulled brain, only the voice of the wife

he had wronged and deserted had power to reach. She bent over him.

‘Frederick, this is Mr. Penroyd ; you remember him, don’t you?—the Rector.’

No answer, but a faint smile, as if it pleased him to hear her voice, another stroking of her slender fingers by his own corpse-like ones, and again the faint childish utterance, ‘Maggie !’ A child in such a tone might have uttered ‘Mother.’

‘You have had advice, of course, madam?’ said Lawyer Snark, who felt that propriety required him to say something, but hardly knew what the something should be. He was defeated, beaten ; this was a greater blow than even the invincible stupidity of Jem O’Brien in preferring revenge to money.

‘We have had the best advice that London could give, and the result is what I told you,’ said Mrs. Glynne, coldly. ‘I brought this—my husband’—the words

came out with a little effort—‘here. My son could not have him in his house. He is not fit to be in the charge of strangers, so I have taken him into mine. There will be no change but one. He will never leave this house but for the churchyard near. It may be years before the end comes. He will stay here till it does.’

Jem O’Brien turned to go.

‘Good-evenin’, ma’am. You have had a hard life of it with him. You’ll have it harder now—only he’ll be quiet,’ he added significantly. ‘I beg your pardon for intrudin’. My account with the master will never be settled now.’

As he went out, with Mr. Snark following, Parson Penroyd came towards Mrs. Glynne and held out his hand :

‘We are very old friends, and you have a hard task before you. Will you let me help you if I can?’

He took her hand in his and held it

firmly. She knew that he felt if he had something to forget, he had nothing to forgive—that he understood and pitied her, and would be her friend, true and loyal, even if he might never be more, as long as life remained to him.

CHAPTER VIII.

BY THE RIVER.

LAWYER SNARK, or Mr. Brown, had disappeared from Brentford. That was all Guy could learn, when he applied to the constables for information respecting that most respectable gentleman. He had disappeared—paying his rent up to the last, however, and had not left any clue to his future destination. Now, nothing was more firmly rooted in Guy's mind than a belief that his former fellow-townsmen had had something to do with the abstraction of the title-deeds and other papers from Reuben Deane's treasure-closet. If he could only

lay hands on Mr. Snark, he felt that something might be forthcoming.

This was about two days after he had learned that Jem O'Brien had broken prison. If Guy had been his own master he would have hurried off to Brentford at once, on receipt of this intelligence; but there had been heavy work at the office of late—all the heavier, perhaps, for Guy, that, owing to recent events, he was not in favour with the junior partner.

But here he was, and he had learned that Mr. Brown had gone, no one knew where. Guy could form a pretty good guess that he had gone to join his acquaintance, Jem O'Brien. But then where was Jem? That clue Guy did not have, and it seemed to him, as he walked, that moonlight night, through what Captain Marryat (blessed be the memory of the writer of 'Peter Simple' and 'Midshipman Easy'!) described in one of his books as 'long, dirty

Brentford,' that things looked gloomy indeed, as far as the success of his wooing was concerned, if he was never to have his wife till Reuben Deane had his tittle-deeds back again.

' Long, dirty Brentford !' I say again, blessed be the memory of the gallant captain ! for the intensest enjoyment I ever knew in my girlish days came from reading those two books of his ; but still, he didn't do justice to Brentford. It's long, certainly—and dirty—well, we won't argue that point ; but, being by the river, and having sundry old buildings in it, Brentford has a beauty of its own, if people will only look for it.

The breaks in the street, the little courts which run down to the river, with curious old houses, with a maritime flavour pervading them, are not without their charm ; and then the river itself ! The glimpse of the water, of the trees on the adjacent

island, of the boats and sailing vessels gliding past—are these nothing? Should we say, if we were looking at a Dutch picture, that they were nothing? And there are curious old houses, and quaint bits of street architecture that are surely a treat and a refreshment to eyes long weary with the sameness of London streets. We will say nothing about the shops. Brentford couldn't touch Regent Street—perhaps not Tottenham Court Road; but then, if you go to Regent Street, you haven't the river, or the little old-world courts bordering it, nor the island, nor the boats, or the ferry that takes you across the water to Kew.

But, ugly or handsome, Guy troubled himself little about Brentford, though on this bright frosty night, with those snow-white glimpses of the river's margin showing through every break in its long line of street, it was looking its best. He would go and talk things over with Reuben

Deane—he did not say with Eunice, but perhaps he thought of her instead. As he went along the embankment the boats lay frozen up in heaps of snow piled round them; the floating ice seemed hourly to be forming one great sheet that should block up traffic. No one was on the water, no one on the land, apparently. Men's voices, in their rough merriment, came from behind the red curtains of the trim little public-houses, but there were no loungers round the doors, no women gossiping in knots over their own troubles or their neighbours' sins—neither boy nor girl to be seen at play or mischief. Over all, that strange quietness brooding, which tells of a great weight of snow in the air, and a great chain of frost on the earth. Nature spell-bound and stagnant, but with a beauty in that solemn stillness, to which all the glow and glory of summer is as nothing.

Forgive this dissertation, and let us pass on to Guy.

When he came near the snug little dwelling of Monsieur, he saw Madame at the door. She was giving a woman a jug with something steaming in it ; and, as the light from the candle she held fell full on Guy, she called him by name, and asked him to come in. The little parlour looked as neat and cosy as ever, but Madame looked so large that she might have said, with that sweetest of writers and best of daughters—Mary Russell Mitford—‘ When I am in the parlour, it looks all *me*.’

There was a bright, wood fire—driftwood, Madame told him, as she put on another log, which they got cheaply, and so could afford the luxury.

‘ Your English coals, bah !—they are all smoke, and flame and dust. No warmth—and so much dirt !’

Guy could not contradict Madame, but

asked after Monsieur. He had gone, she told him, to the funeral of poor Père Lacorde. He was a good man, Monsieur owned that, even if a priest; and he had died alone, in a strange country. Monsieur said he was his compatriot, and would not think of anything else. He had done what he could, and had gone to the funeral to-day—the poor Père Lacorde had wished it, before he died. He said Monsieur had been so good a friend. After the funeral Monsieur would have to attend a class, so that it would be late before he came home. It was so fortunate for her that Monsieur Guy had dropped in as he had done; she had not many visitors now.

‘I saw you with one at the door,’ said Guy.

‘Ah! a poor woman with a sick child and a husband out of work; and of all the *imbéciles*! Knew no more of cooking than M. Guy. Give her a little money and she would buy fat bacon or red herrings! Fine

things for a sick child ! Of soup she knew nothing, but Madame had given her a *potage*. It would do the child good, and, with a slice of bread, make a meal for the husband and herself. The people were better than at first. Last winter they would not take a *potage* of Madame's. They told her they did not like frogs and snails — *les pauvres barbares !* said Madame, with a magnificent pity. 'But they knew better now. The men liked her soup, though she could not persuade the women to learn to make it.'

All this time Madame had been making Guy a cup of her own delicious coffee. When she brought it to him, she settled down in her own cushioned armchair just opposite, for a dish of gossip that should be as good to her as the dish of coffee was for him. Had he been to Mr. Deane's lately ? There would be a wedding there soon, people said. She did not know. She never

went out. But still, from her window she could see what passed; and that young gentleman—a nephew, Monsieur told her—ah! like Guy himself—of Squire Chalcombe in the country—was courting, so they said, and so it seemed, Miss Eunice. Courting! It was so *drôle*. Why not let Mr. Deane settle everything? She had seen him pass, sometimes with one young Meess, sometimes with the other; but the servants said it was Meess Clare he wanted. He was not rich. What should he do with a little governess like Meess Smith? Was Guy going? Nay, but she had another cup of coffee. Would he not wait for Monsieur? He must come again soon.

Guy bade her farewell, and walked away. He did not believe Madame—at least, he believed that she was mistaken. How so sensible a woman—with the aroma of her excellent coffee still lingering on his lips, he could not think her otherwise than sen-

sible—could listen to the gossip of her neighbours, or the hearsay from servants, he could not understand. Still, he would rather she had not spoken thus of Eunice—that any one should couple her name with that of this pert young barrister !

‘As good a girl as ever breathed, I do believe; and if my word can help you to her, you shall have it.’

On the stillness of the air these words reached him. The speaker was just in front—an old man leaning on a stick, and talking with the utmost friendliness to a younger one by his side. The elder man went on :

‘No, I don’t think she has a thought for that youngster—only in the way of friendliness and for old acquaintance-sake. They were near neighbours at Thorpe Leigh, you know; and she is a tender-hearted little soul—she would be sure to be kind to the young fellow, if only for that.’

The speakers were at the gate of Reuben Deane's house, and, as they turned to enter, the light from the lamp suspended above it fell on their faces, and Guy saw, as he had expected—as he felt sure that he should see—that they were the faces of Reuben Deane and Mr. Rae. He turned back and walked away at a furious pace.

This then was the end of Reuben Deane's friendship. He was going to give his girl away to that young fribble. What a fool he had been ever to forgive the old man so weakly as he had done for—for what? Now Guy came to think of it—for lending his father money at fair interest, which he never got back, and setting some almost involuntary services of Guy's against the debt. Still, Reuben Deane knew—must know—that he, Guy, loved Eunice, and that she cared for him; and now he would work on her kindness, her gentleness, her affection for himself,

and induce her, if he could, to give up him, Guy. Let him try it! It wouldn't be done so easily. The old man had set his heart on seeing her mistress of Chalcombe Grange. Mr. Rae was the next heir. He, Guy, might be, nay, was the nearest in blood to the Squire, but that would matter little. But how would it be if the title-deeds of Chalcombe Grange were lost? Who could claim it then? That would be a poser for the lawyers.

Guy looked at the river, and thought how he should like to duck Mr. Rae in it. Then, when the lawyers came into his mind, he said to himself: 'Whatever they may or may not have to do with this, my course is clear. Get those papers back if I can, and take them to Mr. Deane. If I can't get them, fight for my own hand, and make the best home I can for Eunice. Old Deane has done well by me, and he wants to do well by Eunice, but in his own way.

I want to do better for her in mine—and I
will, too—in spite of all the old men,
and the young ones too, who come in my
way !

CHAPTER IX.

MRS. THWAITES IN TOWN.

GUY slept late the next morning—an unusual thing for him to do, but the early part of the night had been broken by dreams of Mr. Rae in unpleasant proximity to Eunice. And he had not gone to bed at his usual time, for, when he got home, he found the passage full of boxes, and Mrs. Thwaites in their small sitting-room. She had come up to keep house for him and Dick. It had been decided that the house she was to keep should not be taken till she was in town to choose it, and she was to share their lodgings in the

interim. Mrs. John Thwaites had been in waiting to receive her sister-in-law, and make her tea for her when she came, so that the traveller should have as home-like a welcome as possible. She had brought a cold fowl, some potted hare prepared by herself, jam, honey, rich plum-cake and muffins. Dick, in the fulness of his heart, gave his aunt a kiss, and said she had prepared a regular Lord Mayor's feast for his mother. But Mrs. Thwaites, when she came, was languid and genteel, and so freezingly polite to Mrs. John, that the good creature felt inclined to go home, and leave her, as she expressed it, to herself. But she thought of Dick, and that restrained her, though it was trying to see that Mrs. Thwaites had too fine an appetite to do more than pick a crumb or two of the cake, as she took her tea. Her journey had been too much for her, she said, and she wondered at Dick's appetite,

and, somehow, made poor Mrs. John, who always made a comfortable meal when she took her tea, feel that she was very vulgar and unladylike in enjoying her muffins as she did. When Mrs. John had gone, Dick's mother had a great deal to say about her manners, and about Dick's, too, which she declared had not at all improved by his stay in London. When Guy came home, all this was repeated for his edification, and then Mrs. Thwaites, feeling in a better frame of mind—as we are all supposed to do when we have done, or think we have done, our duty—partook of what she called a taste of supper. The said taste was the breast and the two wings of the fowl—it was as plump as herself—which Mrs. John had brought, some potted hare, a noble slice of cake, and a stiff glass of gin and water. Mrs. Thwaites always called the spirit Hollands, which she thought gave it quite an aristocratic

flavour. Then she unbent, and gave them some of the gossip of Thorpe Leigh. Mrs. Glynne had taken her husband back again—he was paralysed, and, they said, silly—so she would not have much comfort with him. What a fine man he had been in his day! So like the Regent! And just as gentlemanly, they said, in his manners. It was a strange thing Mrs. Glynne couldn't get on with him. Mrs. Thwaites wouldn't say whose fault it was, but *she* had never had any differences with Dick's poor, dear father. And Miss Chalcombe was dead—that was Miss Augusta—Miss Charlotte had died a year ago, and left all her money to her sister; but who the money was left to, now, Mrs. Thwaites couldn't say. It would be a good thing for Squire Chalcombe if he had some of it. He wanted it bad enough, by all accounts. There was a talk that old Mr. Deane and he had put their heads together, and that

young Mr. Rae, who was such a favourite with the old ladies, and was up in town, studying for the bar, was to marry Miss Clare, and the two were to have the Grange when the Squire died. But that might be only talk, for it was hardly likely a Chalcombe, though only one on the mother's side, and she but a second cousin, would look at old Mr. Deane's great-niece. Mr. Thurstone would feel that himself, though the family had never recognised him. And so on, and so on—such a stream of chatter, and small talk, and petty gossip, till, when Guy got up to bed, he felt that he should have need of all his patience to bear with the infliction that Dick's good heart had brought upon them.

In the morning, when he came down to breakfast, he found that the post had been before him, and there was a letter bearing the Thorpe Leigh post-mark, and coming from the firm of Quail and Flint, Dick's

former employers and the Squire's solicitors, to the effect that Miss Augusta Chalcombe, deceased, had left him in her will the sum of one thousand pounds, and that Mr. Robert Chalcombe, being sole executor, was prepared to pay it to him personally at his residence, or it should be transmitted to his order.

Guy could hardly believe his eyes. That one of his aunts should have forgotten her gentility so far as to remember his existence and name him in her will ! And a thousand pounds, though not a great fortune, was a nice little help towards the home he was striving for. Of course he would go to Thorpe Leigh, and take his money from the Squire, and then he would see Mrs. Glynne, and the Parson, and several other old friends. What would Eunice say to his good luck ?

Dick had gone to business, so there was nobody but Mrs. Thwaites to tell his good

fortune to, and somehow Guy did not feel disposed to tell it to her. She was not in a cheerful frame of mind this morning. She had found fault with everything on the table and everything in the room, to the landlady, by way of impressing her with her superior gentility. Then, while Guy was having his breakfast—she had had hers before he came down, and a very good one—she sat down by the window and looked out at the quiet, dull street, and the unpretending little stationer's opposite, where tradesmen's account-books and lead pencils formed the principal articles sold. Good Mr. Hook ! What a quiet little shop that was ! I bought the paper on which I wrote my first verses there—three copy-books bound in one, and a stiff cover. How politely the old gentleman received my instructions ! If I had been giving him an order for half a dozen ledgers and day-books all complete, he could not have been

more attentive. But Chalton Street at no time was lively, and Mr. Hook's shop was quite one of the old school—good things at a moderate profit, but no display within or without. And she was too far from the New Road to catch more than a faint murmur of its traffic, though, by stretching her neck, she might perhaps see something of the never-ending stream of pedestrians and coaches. But if this was London, she said, with a sorrowful shake of the head, it was hardly worth while coming up all the way from Thorpe Leigh to see it. She should stay, now she had come. How devoutly Guy wished she wouldn't. She knew her duty by Dick, and she meant to do it; though if Dick had stuck to the law, as she wished him to do, he would have had a genteel profession down in the country, and she should not have had to come and live in London smoke to keep house for him.

Guy made quick work with his breakfast—Mrs. Thwaites's maunderings were enough to take his appetite away—and then he hurried off to the counting-house, where the first thing he did was to ask Mr. George Glynne for a short leave of absence, stating that business of some importance called him to Thorpe Leigh.

Mr. George looked surprised, and as if he would have liked to have asked what the business was. But he gave the desired permission—rather grudgingly and stiffly—there was an unspoken antipathy between the two young men, which is hardly to be wondered at—and asked Guy, if he saw his mother, to give his duty to her.

‘And to my father also, if he is well enough to see you, which I fear will hardly be the case. His state gives us all great solicitude, but it must be a comfort to my mother that she is able to have him with her, and to watch over him.’

Then Guy went off to take his place in the coach, and when he got to the booking-office he saw Mr. Rae there, and heard him take an inside place for Thorpe Leigh.

‘Just what I’m going to do,’ said Guy, in some surprise, which for the moment made him forget that he disliked the good-looking young barrister almost as much as he did Mr. George Glynne. ‘Shall we be fellow-travellers, sir?’

‘I suppose so, and I hope your errand is the same as mine. Miss Chalcombe has left me a legacy, and I am going down to receive it.’

He spoke so frankly and pleasantly, that Guy felt ashamed of his dislike to him. The young barrister went on :

‘We are cousins, you know, although at some distance, and you were nearer kin to Miss Chalcombe than myself.’

‘I never expected anything from the

kinship, however,' said Guy ; ' but I am glad of the windfall.'

' And I am glad of mine, too. It may be of great service to me, now,' said the other, with a meaning which Guy thought he understood. *His* thousand would furnish *his* nest, but he was not going to bring Eunice Clare to it.

' He deserves his money, I dare say,' thought Guy, ' and I'm glad he's got it. But he doesn't deserve *her*. Now I think of it, I don't know that I have any especial deserving either, but I mean to have her, all the same.'

It was a bitter cold morning when they started from the coach-office, but the two young men were in good health, well-wrapped up, and in excellent spirits. They talked very freely of a great many things, but, somehow, kept clear of Mr. Deane and his household. Guy could not help feeling that his distant cousin would have been

well worth the knowing, had it not happened that their tastes were unhappily too much alike. They had a great many likings in common; unhappily the liking Eunice was one of them.

‘He shan’t have her,’ said Guy to himself. ‘He may have the Grange and the lands, and welcome — but my girl, no!’

It was six o’clock in the afternoon when they reached Thorpe Leigh. They had been travelling since four in the morning. The first thing was to obtain some refreshment, which they did in the form of chops and ale at the Blue Falcon.

‘I think, as we have come in for a legacy, we might drink each other’s health in a bottle of our host’s best port,’ said Mr. Rae, reaching out his hand to the bell-rope and ordering the wine.

He was full of chat over the meal—one of the pleasantest fellows Guy had ever

known, with plenty of stories of the bar mess and his school-days. If only he had not been in love with Eunice, Guy would have thought him, next to Dick, the best fellow in the world.

CHAPTER X.

GUY'S TRIUMPH.

SQUIRE CHALCOMBE sat by his fireside, his feet on the fender, his glass of wine in his hand, his wife before him, and a very evil look upon his face. Now and then it took audible shape, and became an evil word, flung at the wife who was legally bound to bear it. Mrs. Chalcombe knitted on in silent endurance.

‘If those old women had only done as they ought, I might have cleared off everything, and set old Deane at defiance. To think of their endowing a church, and leav-

ing the rest of their money to those two lads—curse 'em !'

Mrs. Chalcombe went on knitting, and the pained, scared look on her pale face deepened.

Presently there was a knock, and the 'two lads,' against whom the Squire had been inveighing, came in. Mr. Chalcombe received them with a distant civility. It was rather hard to have to pay away money which he had much rather have kept, and it seemed a refinement of cruelty in his sisters to have given him such a task. But Miss Augusta, though she had left some thousands to endow a church, and had remembered, at the last, that her younger sister's son had at least as much claim on her as Theodore Rae, had not dealt unkindly by her brother. It was she who had advanced the Squire the money with which he had bought the Thurstone lands, and, in her will, she had forgiven him the

debt and the two years' interest which was due. But this counted for nothing with Squire Chalcombe.

He paid his young kinsmen their money, took their receipts in all due form, and then, turning to his wife, bade her ring for wine. He had always been on civil terms with Theodore Rae, and, as Guy was evidently prospering, it was as well to be on fairly civil terms with him. But the Squire could not be cordial. He felt himself too ill used for that.

As he poured out the wine, he said to Mr. Rae :

‘Those old ladies have cheated both you and me. They have left me nothing, and you just one quarter what I expected they would do ; while as to you,’ turning to Guy, ‘I never expected you would get anything.’

‘I shall make a good use of it, sir,’ said Guy. ‘I have an investment for that and

some other savings I have by me, about which I should like to consult you, sir.'

Theodore Rae rose to go.

'I'll leave you to talk your business over,' he said, in his pleasant, good-humoured way. 'You'll find me at the Blue Falcon when you've done.'

Mrs. Chalcombe rose to go. Guy opened the door for her as politely as any gentleman could have done, and held out his hand to say good-night.

'You've picked up some manners since you went to town,' said the Squire.

'I don't know that they are any better than I learned in my father's house,' answered Guy. 'He gave me good training, sir. But about this business. I did not wish to consult you about an investment so much as to ask you to help me to one. You bought my father's lands. Are you disposed to part with them again?'

‘If I get the money back that I gave for them, I might do so,’ said the Squire, who in reality would have been glad to take much less, so great was his need of money. ‘I gave two thousand pounds, including the house.’

‘I am ready to buy it back at that price,’ said Guy. ‘When will you set your lawyers to work, and what shall I give you as a deposit?’

‘Five hundred will do,’ said the Squire, ‘the half of what I have just given you.’

It was a tolerably large sum for a deposit on a couple of thousand pounds, but Guy was too eager to secure his father’s heritage to think of that. His hands fairly trembled with eagerness as he counted out the notes, and, laying them down, took up the receipt, and said with quivering lips :

‘Back at last, Squire ! There will be Thurstones again in the county, and living, after a time, in the old house.’

‘It’s all falling to pieces,’ said the Squire. ‘You’ll have something to do to repair it. I put my bailiff and his wife in it, just to keep it aired.’

‘He may stop there for the present,’ said Guy. ‘I shall see to the house as soon as I have a little money to spare. I shall not be rich enough to live there for many a day. Still, *it is mine.*’

So he went out of the house—the proudest and happiest man that ever left its door—prouder and happier even than when he felt that no man could any longer say his dead father owed him anything. By the strength of his right arm, by a sudden impulse such as it would have been a shame for a young man not to have felt and acted on, he had rendered services by which he had given what had been acknowledged as full value for that debt. But that had been so easily done, while the half of the money he had to give for

the Thurstone lands had been toiled for in the counting-house, and in over-hours, saved for, reckoned up ; and now this wind-fall from his mother's sister had come, as if to crown his efforts, and reward him with success.

‘He'll have them back,’ said the Squire to himself. ‘He'll make more and more thousands, and come down here, build a fine new house on the site of the tumble-down old place, and we shall have a Thurstone calling himself as good a squire as any of them all. There will be no Chalcombes left then. It may be just as well that I haven't a son. Under ten thousand would clear me off with old Deane. I suppose, in another year or so, I shall have him reigning here, and then whoever marries that palefaced cripple of his will be master here.’ As well Lucy's boy as any other. For he is Lucy's boy, after all—and she was a soft, pretty creature.’

Then the Squire took another glass of wine—a bumper this time—and, leaning back in his chair, looked at the notes, and thought of many uses for them, and how hard it was his lands and his home should all be taken from him, and given to an old money-lender like Reuben Deane.

CHAPTER XI.

THE OLD HOME.

GUY went to bed early, having first paid a visit to Mrs. Glynne, and, the next morning, was downstairs in good time, but found his companion before him.

‘What are you going to do with yourself?’ asked Theodore Rae. ‘I shall have a look round this quiet little town. Some one—I—I—know has friends living here; and having come into that pot of money, I don’t feel disposed to go back to the Temple, and grind away at the law just yet.’

‘I? I—am going to look at a purchase

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...the ...

...of great service to me, now, said the
 other, with a meaning which I lay through
 the undertone. Hardness would turn
 his net, but he was not going to let
 Fanny Claret in.

"He deserves his money," I answered. "I thought so, until the girl told me. But he doesn't deserve her. Now I don't know that I have anyone deserving either, but I mean to be all the same."

It was a bitter cold morning and started from the coach-office but young men were in good luck wrapped up, and in excellent spirits talked very freely of a great deal but, somehow, kept clear of Mr. his household. Guy could not that his distant cousin was

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I am about to make of Squire Chalcombe,' said Guy, with a little stiffness. That some one who had friends were living down here must be Eunice, and what right had Mr. Theodore Rae to talk of her like that?

'May I come with you, and give you my opinion. Is it a horse, or a house, or a piece of land?'

'Why should you care to come?' asked Guy. 'It is only an old tumbledown place, as the Squire called it, and a bit of a farm—not worth your troubling yourself about. My father lived there—so did his people before him. And Squire Chalcombe, into whose hands it has come, has sold it back to me. And to me it is everything—it is all the world; but what should it be to you?'

'Nothing—only I am very glad you have got it. And I hope you will make a fortune in the City, and come there with your wife, and your children, while you

are still young enough to enjoy it,' said the other, with invincible good-temper, which always distinguished him.

'My wife! What have you to do with her?' said Guy, irritably. He was a good fellow, but he certainly did not possess Theodore Rae's happy equanimity.

'Nothing!—so long as we don't want the same one. And though you do go to a certain old house by the river very often, it doesn't follow that you do so on Miss Smith's account. There—I ought not to have told you, but it seems to me we are at cross purposes——'

'Oh!—is it—Miss Smith? I caught a word or two that you were saying to Mr. Deane, the other night, and—I—I thought they had reference to—to——'

'To Miss Eunice Clare. A very charming young lady, but I do not think one likely to favour the suit of your humble servant. To tell you the plain truth, Mr.

Guy Thurstone—for I think you're an honest fellow, and one that one may tell the truth to—I did go there, first, with an eye to Miss Clare ; those old ladies at Bath had a fancy that she would be a very desirable match. I had the same fancy, but I soon saw that it was an idle one. Miss Clare would none of me. I never actually proposed—I could see which way the land lay without that ; and Miss Smith is far more to my mind. Don't look daggers ! Isn't it a lucky thing that we are not both of the same opinion ? But perhaps if I had not been so candid with the old ladies, they might not have endowed that church. I know the night you mean ; I was asking Mr. Deane to use his interest, on my behalf, with Mary Ann. I'm sorry I did so now—I know of a better intercessor. She thinks a great deal of you, Mr. Guy Thurstone ; a word now from you. It's very foolish, but I am

afraid to put my fortune to the test myself.'

'I'll speak for you with pleasure,' said Guy; 'but, to tell you the truth, I'm afraid it will not be of much use. I suspect you are too late in the field.'

'I have been afraid so myself, at times, and that has kept me back. I'm not naturally a shy fellow, but if ever I have tried to open my mouth to Miss Smith, something has come and made me shut it up again. I've begun twenty times, and failed; then I spoke to old Deane—but I think she would be more likely to listen to you.'

'Guy thought how much rather he would have spoken for Dick; but if Mary Ann would not have him—and it seemed as if there was no inducing her to see what a really good fellow he was—he would be doing his old friend no injury by pleading the cause of his new one. But he would

tell Dick what he had done, and how it had come about that he had pleaded somebody else's cause than his.

'Poor Dick ! I wish it was him I had to speak for,' he said, as he went to look at the fields that had been his father's, and were to be his, and the homely old homestead in which he had been born.

The house would want money laying out on it, and the land had not been as well cultivated as it should have been. For so many years Squire Chalcombe had been a needy man, and, though a fit of greed had induced him to become the purchaser of Richard Thurstone's farm, when the bank had offered it for sale, he had had no money to spare, even for repairing fences. The bailiff and his wife, people only a step or two above the labourers the former looked after, lived in two or three of the rooms of the farmhouse, and the wife was

full of complaints as to the state of the roof, and many minor matters.

Was it coming back to Mr. Thurstone again? Then things would be better. He would never let his father's house fall to rack and ruin for the sake of a few pounds. The Squire grudged every penny he spent on the place, but then every one knew he was very much put to it.

Guy got rid of the good woman at last, and went over the old house by himself. His own, own home! Where his father, and his father's fathers before him, had been born, and where, please God, he would come, some day, with his wife and children, and settle down for the remainder of his life.

He had been tempted—oh! how tempted—when he first heard of Miss Chalcombe's legacy, to ask Eunice to share his fate at once, in which case he might have had to give up, perhaps for ever, all hope of ever

being the master of his father's lands. He should have to wait for Eunice ; he would tell her frankly what he had done, and he had little fear but that she would say he had been in the right. He would let the lands and the house for a time, work harder, if possible, than ever, and, in God's good time, he would have Eunice for his wife, and this old place for his home.

Hour after hour he spent in roaming over the fields and through the rooms, lost in memories of the past, and day-dreams of the future. Then he went to the office of Messrs. Quail and Flint, where he found the Squire awaiting him, by appointment, but in a very different frame of mind to that he had been in the preceding night. He was more overbearing and insolent than ever, and yet, at times, there was a scared, strange look in his face, as of a man who has done something he is glad to have done, and yet feels afraid of the consequences.

He told Guy that, if he had not paid the deposit down, he should not have had the farm so cheap ; then checked himself and muttered : ‘ That money came in damned handy, however.’ He was very particular about some fencing between the Thurstone lands and the Chalcombe estate, insisting that Guy should keep it in order, that the Thurstones had always done so, and always should, so long as he was master at Chalcombe Grange. Old Mr. Flint, who never cared much what he said to his clients, being tolerably independent of the practice, looked over his gold-rimmed spectacles and said :

‘ Will that be very long, Squire ?’

Upon which the Squire swore, and told him to mind his own business, or he would not have much more of his (Mr. Chalcombe’s) to see to.

Mr. Flint mended his pen, and said nothing, thinking that the Squire had been

drinking rather earlier than usual, and that it was ill wasting words on a man in that condition. But the Squire was sober enough; only, a visitor he had had the previous evening had something to do with this change of mood.

CHAPTER XII.

MR. SNARK'S BARGAIN.

WHEN his two young kinsmen had left him, the Squire poured the last remains of the decanter into his glass, and, crossing his feet, looked into the fire and felt more ill-used than ever. To think that Thurstone's boy had got on so well, that he was able to buy back his father's lands! If Augusta had done her duty by him as her brother, she would have prevented the necessity of his selling them.

'It would have been a great deal better than endowing a church,' said the Squire. 'I suppose the Parson got over her as he

gets over all the women ; but Augusta always was a fool. I may be able to stave Deane off a little longer now, if he'll be content with the interest ; but he may foreclose, as he has talked of doing, and then good-bye to the Chalcombes for ever. I wonder, if that young fellow who has just gone had been my son, whether he would have fought as hard for this old place as he has fought for that hovel of the 'Thurstones' ? I think he would. Now it will all go—it will all go—and that workhouse boy will have the old place soon for his own.'

And in this mood the tempter found the Squire. The tempter was Mr. Snark, who was received with an oath and a very blunt inquiry as to his business there.

The Squire was not exactly what we should call a good man, and, though a thorough churchman—going to church every Sunday, and classing dissenters,

poachers, and felons as all birds of a feather—not quite what one would call a Christian. Still, Mr. Snark had behaved in so utterly villainous a manner, that the Squire felt affronted by his very presence, and could only conclude that Mr. Deane had sent him as a fitting emissary.

‘I have not come from that gentleman,’ said Mr. Snark blandly, in answer to a question not put so politely as it might have been; ‘but *I have* come, Squire Chalcombe, to ask you’—and he looked at the door as he spoke, and lowered his voice—‘I have come to ask you if you do not think that the title-deeds of your property, the mortgage deeds of this house and the Chalcombe estate, and the bill of sale of the furniture would be just as well in your possession as in his?’

‘D——n you, sir! what do you mean?’ cried the Squire, starting to his feet and seizing the poker. ‘Have you come here

to insult me?—when you know that he's got the deeds, and that I could no more get them back than—than—I could make people believe you to be an honest man.'

'I think the insult comes from *you* now, Squire,' was the answer, given in Mr. Snark's gentlest tone; 'but I don't want to bandy words. I come with the best intentions. I can help myself a little and you a very great deal, and confer a benefit on the County, too; for it would be a pity—a very sad pity, to see this fine old place in the hands of a money-lender who was born in the workhouse.'

'Well, Mr. Snark, what is all this to lead to?'

'If you had the deeds of which you speak in your own possession, Mr. Chalcombe, you could laugh at Mr. Deane. It would be next to—nay, wholly, impossible for him to prove his claim to your property. That would give you time, sir—time to clear off

these encumbrances ; and the only difference, it seems to me, between the papers I speak of being in Mr. Deane's possession or in yours, is that you could take your own time, not his, to clear things.'

'If I had those deeds—if they were in my own hands—' murmured the Squire dreamily ; 'but how the —— am I to get them, Mr. Snark ?'

'I think I could get them for you—if it was made worth my while,' said Mr. Snark, meditatively.

'Should I be safe, even then ?' said the Squire, half-aloud.

'Your lands and your house and your furniture would be so far safe that they would be in your own hands instead of Mr. Deane's. Understand me, Mr. Chalcombe,' said Mr. Snark, with an air of virtuous austerity, 'I am not saying these deeds are to be placed in your hands for the purpose of enabling you to despoil Mr. Deane of his

due. But he is a hard man, and, if you had time given you, your estates might be your own.'

'I see, exactly. I could pay him when I choose,' said the Squire. 'I should pay him of course, Mr. Snark; but—but—are you sure that my possession of the deeds would make all things safe?'

'Mr. Deane might cause you a little annoyance—he could do nothing further. When a man hasn't a scrap of paper—nothing but his bare word to show, what *can* he do? Why, my dear sir, it would rest with yourself whether you ever paid him anything. If you chose—but of course you would *not* choose—to set him at defiance and ignore his claim completely, there would be nothing to prevent your doing it. The old fellow might show his teeth, but he couldn't bite with them.'

'Of course I *should* pay him sooner or

later,' said the Squire, 'but as you say, Mr. Snark, I should be glad to have more time given me for the purpose than Mr. Deane is likely to allow me. Would you believe it,' and the veins in the Squire's red face swelled as if they would burst, 'he actually talks of foreclosing! Turning me out of house and home, and taking the very bed I sleep on—the very chair I sit on, from me!'

'He's quite capable of doing it, too,' said Mr. Snark, 'unless prevented. Well, you *can* prevent it, Mr. Chalcombe. It doesn't matter how, but a friend of mine has these deeds in his possession—he obtained them at some risk. He naturally wishes to be paid for that risk. He would give the deeds up to you, Squire—for—let us say, a thousand pounds.'

'A thousand devils! How am I to raise the money?' cried Mr. Chalcombe.

'Men with lands and houses can always

raise money,' said Mr. Snark; 'and I thought there was one portion of your property unencumbered—at least, that your sister's death has made it so. I mean the Thurstone lands, which Miss Chalcombe advanced the money for you to purchase. I have heard that, by her will, she freed you of the debt.'

'And little enough it was for her to do!' said the Squire. 'To think of a woman robbing her relatives to endow a church! But a thousand pounds! I don't say I couldn't do it, Mr. Snark,' he said slowly, as he thought of the money Guy was to pay him for his late father's lands, 'but the sum you ask is too much. Of course, if I were rascal enough to say that when I had these papers I shouldn't pay old Deane all that was due to him, in time, it would be another matter. But I *do* mean to pay him, Mr. Snark. Don't you run away with the idea that I don't. I never

cheated anybody yet, and it's too late in the day for me to begin, now !

The Squire walked up and down, looking honesty itself, and as inflated as a turkey-cock. Mr. Snark wondered how much he believed of what he was saying.

'I know that—I know that, of course,' said he. 'Do you think I ever doubted your honesty for a second, Squire ? If I had thought you meant to profit as much as you *might* do by these deeds, why, I should ask a couple of thousand for them, instead of one. But the time, Mr. Chalcombe, the *time* that the possession of these deeds gives you, is worth everything.'

'I don't know how to get a thousand,' said the Squire, 'no, nor half the money.' Then the remembrance of the notes which Guy had paid him, and which were now reposing in his pocket-book, flashed on him. If for these notes he could obtain the deeds, and so be a free man ! He

walked hastily up and down, then stopped short, in front of the lawyer. 'I suppose the truth is, you have the deeds, yourself,' he said; 'I take it you are your own friend, eh? Well, it so happens I can lay my hand on just five hundred pounds—Bank of England notes. I'll show them to you, if you like—show me your bits of paper, too—your pockets look rather bulky, Mr. Snark—and we'll make an exchange.'

'I *am* my own friend,' said Mr. Snark, with one of his pleasantest smiles; 'that is to say, you are right in supposing, Mr. Chalcombe, that I am in possession of these deeds—that they are about me, in fact; but five hundred is not enough for them. I must have double that, sir—and you get a cheap bargain, then.' He took the bulky documents from his greatcoat pockets, and, opening them one after the other, displayed them to the eager eyes of Squire Chalcombe. 'There is what will make you a

rich man, Squire, with a little care and management. If you were once free from this interest, which seems eating you to death, you would be able to turn round.'

'I know that—I know that,' said the Squire, eagerly, on his part displaying the good, clean Bank of England notes, which had changed hands already twice that afternoon; 'but I have no more ready money than that in the world—can't raise it just yet, either. But I tell you what, Snark—you shall have these to-night, and three hundred more, down, when the purchase-money of the Thurstone estates is completed. My nephew—d——n him, I suppose he is my nephew, after all—is in treaty for them. That's the best I can do——'

'Say five when you get the money from young Thurstone,' said Mr. Snark. 'Why, *he* would give me as much as I am asking you, Squire, just for the chance of getting

the money, and a hundred or two more on to it, from old Deane.'

'But I take it, you wouldn't like to go to him with these deeds,' said the Squire. 'He might call in the watch, or, being a strapping youngster, save the hangman his work by knocking you down, and helping himself. But there, Snark—I never was good at bargaining—you shall have the other five, say in a month's time; I don't suppose those confounded lawyers will keep me waiting longer. But I must have the deeds at once, or I'll cry off. There, take a bit of paper and draw up a memorandum that, for value received, I agree to pay you the sum of five hundred pounds—you must give me two months—and you may take this five hundred with you.'

And so the bargain was settled, and each party took the roll of paper or parchment that contented him most.

CHAPTER XIII.

'THE OTHER FELLOW,' AGAIN.

GUY returned to town the day after his interview with the Squire, his leave of absence from the office in the City not being a long one. Mr. Theodore Rae travelled in the coach with him as far as Bath, and then got out, as he had arranged, there being one or two old friends there he wished to see.

'You'll do your best for me,' he whispered at parting.

And the rejoinder was: 'I'll do what I can.'

Guy was to let him know how he pros-

pered, but he thought, himself, that if it had been his own case he would never have asked another to plead for him, nor have waited for the post to tell him whether he had won his lady or not.

He found Dick very glad to see him.

‘Mother’s rather trying,’ he told him, after an uncomfortable tea, when Mrs. Thwaites had grumbled at everything on the table, and had gone upstairs to put away some purchases she had been making.

‘I don’t think London agrees with her,’ said honest Dick, ‘and perhaps I ought to have taken better lodgings than these for her, but I didn’t think it mattered, as we were not likely to stay long. She doesn’t get on with the landlady, and she doesn’t get on with the maid, and Mrs. John and she don’t hit it together at all. It’s a dreadful thing to have to say, Guy—a dreadful thing, of one’s own mother—but I

really am afraid I shan't be quite so comfortable now she's come to London as I was before. And what will you do, Guy ?

'Never mind me, dear old fellow ; but don't be in too great a hurry about the house—perhaps Mrs. Thwaites may find London air does not suit her any more than London people seem to do ; perhaps she would rather go back to Thorpe Leigh with a little extra help from you, Dick, and you and I might set up house together again in a different fashion to this.'

Guy had been maturing his plans as he rode homewards. He would ask Eunice of her uncle at once. He was a more equal match for her now than when Reuben Deane had held the deeds that virtually made him master of Chalcombe. And if Eunice and he kept house together, why should not Dick share it ? His best of friends—his most loyal of brothers—Eunice would soon learn to love Dick for

his sake. And Reuben Deane should come too, if he liked it. So long as he had Eunice, his roof-tree would be wide enough for all. There was one thing, too, he had decided on—he would tell Dick of Theodore Rae's commission, and if he, Dick, thought that Guy, as his friend, should not undertake it, he would write to Rae, and tell him enough of the circumstances to make him see why it was that he gave up the task.

He told Dick all about Mr. Rae, that very night. Dick heard him, with his usual mournful patience whenever Mary Ann was mentioned.

'I'm sorry for him, Guy—I'm very sorry—but it will be of no use. She won't have him. She's set upon the other fellow. But *I* don't mind your speaking for Mr. Rae, Guy—only it will be no use, you'll see—she's set her mind on that other fellow, and if she can't get him, she'll marry nobody.'

Guy left business as early as he could the next evening, and, taking the coach to Turnham Green, walked through the fields and nursery-gardens to the old house by the river.

Only Mary Ann was at home. Mr. Deane was out, she told him. He had gone up to town on business, and had not yet returned. Eunice was with him. Since his fall in the City, Mr. Deane had been ailing, and had not liked to go out alone. Besides, his losses had affected him. Did Mr. Thurstone know that he had offered five hundred pounds for the recovery of his deeds? And how did Mr. Thurstone find Thorpe Leigh, and all the people in it?

Mary Ann was perfectly free and unembarrassed. It was impossible that Guy could feel for a moment that *he* was 'the other fellow' who had supplanted poor Dick in her affections. He told her all about Thorpe Leigh, then of his journey there,

and his companion on the road—‘Who, I think, is an acquaintance of yours, Mary Ann, and wanted very hard, poor fellow, to be something more!’

Mary Ann blushed and tittered.

‘It is so foolish of him! I thought it was Eunice he came after.’

‘Well, but he didn’t. He has told me so, plainly. It is you he wants, Mary Ann, and I think he is a good fellow—pleasant and good-tempered—one I am sure your mother would approve of, and one who I think would be likely to make a girl happy.’

‘Yes,’ said Mary Ann, blushing again, ‘he might—that is—if—if——’

‘If the girl didn’t care for anybody else—is that it, Mary Ann? Poor Dick told me something of that long ago when you refused him—he and I have no secrets from each other—but I should have thought you would have got over that fancy before this.’

Mary Ann coloured furiously this time.

'*That* foolish fancy indeed!' she said irritably. 'I was a silly girl who did not know what was good for me at the time. I've got wiser now, and I wouldn't—no! I wouldn't have—*him*—no, not if he was king of England! I can't think how I ever could have been such a silly girl as to have cared a moment for him.'

Mary Ann had a positive pleasure in despising Guy to his very face, triumphing over him, although he was all unconscious that he was so despised and triumphed over. She was able to express her disdain, although he was unconscious that it was of him she was expressing it.

'I was such a girl then,' she said, 'and a very silly one indeed, ever to have given that gentleman a thought.'

'Then you are fancy-free, Mary Ann, and so there is a good chance for Mr. Rae? Is that so?' asked Guy.

Mary Ann looked shyly on the ground.

‘ I don’t—care—for Mr. Rae.’

‘ Why, you don’t seem able to care for any one,’ cried Guy. ‘ You’ve thrown over that other fellow, on whose account you gave poor Dick the go-by ; you don’t care for Dick, though he’s one of the best fellows in the world, and you don’t care for Mr. Rae.’

Mary Ann kept her eyes fixed on the ground. Presently, as if with a great effort, and in a very low voice, she said :

‘ It is a very long time since I said I did not care for Mr. Thwaites.’

Guy looked at her intently. Then a sudden light flashed on him.

‘ It’s such a long time, Mary Ann, that it has been long enough for you to change your mind ! Isn’t that it ? Do tell me so. There’s only one thing in the world could make me happier than to be able to go home and tell Dick you’ve forgotten all about the

other fellow, and are ready to take him for better or worse. But there won’t be much worse in it if you take Dick. Is that so? Say it is, and, excepting one, you’ll be the best and dearest girl in all the world.’

Mary Ann still kept her eyes fixed on the ground, her colour came and went, and her lips quivered. Then she began to cry, and sobbed out :

‘He—is so good ! I don’t think I deserve him.’

‘You’ve been a long time finding *that* out,’ thought Guy ; but he said :

‘He *is* good—there never was a better. If you knew how he has thought of your happiness, and never considered his own—how he has tried to find out who that other fellow was that you had such a foolish fancy for, so that he might see if he couldn’t bring matters about. He never *did* find him, and perhaps, as things have turned out, it was just as well he didn’t.

‘Oh, don’t talk of that other!’ cried Mary Ann, between her tears. ‘I hope Dick and you will never know him. I am ashamed of myself for having been so silly.’

‘Well, I don’t think you were very wise in throwing over Dick Thwaites for *any* one else—let the other have been who he may,’ said Guy. ‘But it has all come right now; and if it wasn’t that—that I rather want to see Mr. Deane—and—and—Eunice to-night, I should hurry up to London and tell Dick the good news at once. He’ll be down to-morrow, there’s no fear of that. But—but—I say, Mary Ann, whatever am I to tell Mr. Rae?’

‘Tell him I’ve been blind for years, and that my eyes are opened at last,’ said Mary Ann.

And then a knock at the street-door announced the return of Reuben Deane and Eunice.

CHAPTER XIV.

GUY'S TASK.

REUBEN DEANE looked worn and exhausted when he came in—troubled and harassed—the loss of his securities seemed weighing heavily on him. Eunice had got him wine, of which he seemed in need, and, after a time, he was sufficiently recovered to be able to ask Guy about his journey to Thorpe Leigh, and inquire after Mrs. Glynne and the Parson. Guy told him, too, of his uncle, and the purchase he was about making.

‘It’s a good thing to do,’ the old man muttered, ‘and I hope you’ll keep the

lands when you get them, boy—not let them slip through your fingers, as I’ve let the Chalcombe lands. I meant to have foreclosed this summer, and taken Eunice down—to be as queen where Lucy Chalcombe was little more than servant. You don’t know all I’d built on doing—and now I am beggared and ruined.’

Mary Ann slipped out of the room, as she was in the habit of doing when Reuben Deane talked of his affairs. Eunice crept up to her uncle, and stole her hand in his.

‘Things are not so bad as that, dear,’ she said, softly. ‘We can keep house and home together.’

‘You can keep house and home together with me if you will,’ said Guy. ‘Give Eunice to me, Mr. Deane, and let her keep house for us both. Dick is going to marry. I am not rich, but the Thurstone farm will bring me in a good addition to my income when once it’s let; and Eunice, here, will

not mind waiting for a few of the fine things a richer man might give her. I'll give them to her in time.'

Eunice stood pale and trembling at her uncle's side. He looked up at her with a pitiful cry.

'You like him, girl! You like the young lover better than the old uncle?'

'Dear, dear uncle, I love you as much as ever.'

'But you love him better. Well, I was prepared for that. I couldn't keep you always. I didn't wish it. But I *did* wish to see you mistress of Chalcombe when you married. Yes, and—I'll own it now—I'd set my heart on seeing Lucy Chalcombe's son its master. If I seemed to grudge you to him, it was only for a moment. I've watched you drawing nigher and nigher to each other—and I've said that all things were working together as I wished them. And then there came that

theft. Oh, it was cruel—cruel! I'd have died a beggar—gone back to the workhouse where I was born, if I could have seen you two master and mistress there. And now Robert Chalcombe—the man who spurned me like a dog when I asked him for his sister—who gave me no chance of winning her, for it isn't to be expected that a girl can turn to a grave man twice her age as she does to a handsome young fellow like Richard Thurstone: I bear him no ill-will for loving Lucy—she was made to be beloved by all but her own kin:—but I might have had a fair chance given me of measuring my strength with his—I might have had fair words and civil usage, instead of the treatment of a cur: and now Robert Chalcombe will have it all his own way—if once he knows those deeds are gone—and he'll suspect it when once he sees a reward offered for deeds of mine. Oh! I know him! I know him! Your

foe, and my foe, Guy! And he's got the better of us both at last.'

'We can be happy enough without him,' said Guy. 'Only give me Eunice, sir——'

'I'll give her to you when you can make her mistress of Chalcombe Grange,' said the old man. 'She marries with that as her dower, or she doesn't marry at all. There's a task for you, youngster. You've got to work for my girl before you can get her. She doesn't go a beggar to any man's fireside.'

Guy looked vexed and angry. Eunice motioned him to silence—then she held out her hand :

'We can wait, Guy,' she said softly.

'It will be a long waiting, unless he gets back Chalcombe,' said the old man, gravely; 'for I don't mean to die till he *has* got it. I've got some work in me yet, and I'll take to work again, and I'll scrape, and I'll save, but I'll get the better of Chalcombe.'

I shall have many a penny to pay the lawyers, but I'll pay them, and, one way or another, we'll keep Squire Chalcombe from feeling very secure about the place he calls his own. But it will be a hard fight—a hard fight,' he said wearily, 'and your pretty hair will grow grey, my girl, in the waiting.'

She caressed and soothed him tenderly, then motioned to Guy to go. He caught her hand and kissed it; then, growing bold, drew her to him and pressed her lips.

'Please God, I'll get you yet, and without such a long waiting, either.'

CHAPTER XV.

MR. SNARK IS BUSY.

MR. SNARK was at breakfast in those comfortable old rooms of his, at Hammersmith Mall. He had thought it advisable to return to them very soon after his interview with the Squire, and, as he had come back a richer man than he went, by five hundred pounds, one might suppose that he would be a tolerably contented one. But he was not, he looked out of sorts, and out of temper, as he read, again and again, an advertisement in the damp sheet of the *Times*, which the newsboy had just brought in.

‘Two thousand pounds reward for certain deeds stolen from a house on the north bank of the river, on or about the 14th of February last.’

‘Two thousand ! and I have let them go for one ! If that old fool had only made his offer sooner I would never have given them up to the Squire. Is it the old fool, though, who is inserting this ? “Apply to G. T., 93, Chalton Street, Somers Town.” Mr. Deane doesn’t live there, and I take it he has quite enough still left to keep him in a better locality than Somers Town. “G. T.”—“G. T.”—these are the initials of that young fellow, Chalcombe’s nephew. What interest could he have in the restoration of the deeds ? I don’t know—if that girl of Deane’s hadn’t been such an ugly little cripple, there might have been something in it. I’ll write to “G. T.” There can’t be much harm in

seeing him in the City; I'll name the Golden Lion Coffee-house, seven o'clock to-morrow evening. I think I'll say I can give a clue—that will be enough for the present. Two thousand pounds!—now with that and the Squire's five hundred, I could get away comfortably to New York, and perhaps discount the widow's notes when I arrive there. And I might get up a little practice—or start at the bar—I should do well at the American bar; and I'd send for Sally——'

Mr. Snark's meditations were interrupted in a manner that made him feel that it would have been as well if he had kept others, besides 'G. T.', in ignorance of his *locale*. Dirtier, shabbier, more brute-like than ever, Jem O'Brien entered the room, and flung himself down in a chair by the fire.

'Bring another plate, and a cup and saucer,' he said, turning to the girl, who, having vainly tried to prevent his ascend-

ing the stairs, had timidly followed him into the room. 'I'm starvin',' he said, eyeing the breakfast-table with the gaze of a famished wolf, 'an' here you are in the héight of luxury.' He seized the loaf as he spoke, and, cutting off a huge slice, spread it thickly with butter, and began to eat ravenously. 'If that girl doesn't come with a cup,' he muttered, 'I'll be drinkin' out o' the basin, an' that 'ud hardly be manners, would it, Lawyer Snark ?'

'Don't make so free with my name,' said the gentleman addressed, and, ringing the bell, he desired the articles Mr. O'Brien had asked for to be brought up, and, drawing away from the table, left the other to feed—like the beast he was—alone.

Presently he said :

'What brought you here, Jem ? I thought you would have found it safer to have stayed in the country.'

‘I came to see after my rights. I’ve never had the value of a penny piece from you, Mr. Snark—or Brown—whichever you like to be callin’ yourself; an’ there was a dale I got out of that ould place, besides just the bits o’ paper I got for meself. To think of my gettin’ them *too late*. Only a little sooner and I might have squared accounts with the villin! Well—well—it wasn’t to be; but it’s hard my poor Mary should be chated out of her dues. But I won’t be chated out o’ mine,’ he said suddenly; ‘I’m not much of a scholar, but I can read print, and I saw a fellow stickin’ these up round about St. Giles’s last night. He’d a lot of ’em, an’ he was going to do Seven Dials, Houndsditch, and then go in the country—to Thorpe Leigh, of all places in the world—with more.’

He produced a handbill, which was a copy of the very advertisement Mr. Snark

had been reading in the *Times* just before he came.

‘Now you see the value of them deeds. I’ve a right to half of ’em. There was a dale besides what I wanted for my own purpose. And now I’m chated out o’ *that*, I’ve all the more rason to say that I expect something instead. Two thousand! I ought to have half, at the laste. I thought it was quare you’d want such a hape if they were to be no good to you.’

Mr. Snark read the handbill with great apparent interest. Then he said in his friendliest tones :

‘You made a good haul, Jem—a better than you thought for, that’s clear—when you helped yourself to old Deane’s papers.’

‘You’ve got ’em—you’ve got ’em all right?’ asked the Irishman, eagerly.

‘They’re not here, and, not knowing their value, I’m afraid I haven’t taken such good care of them as I ought to have

done. But don't distress yourself, Jem. With a little management I think I shall be able to get them again, and then—well, I never behaved shabbily—I shall be willing to go shares with you; that is, after all expenses are paid. It may cost me something to get these papers back.'

'That seems only fair and raysonable,' said Jem, who was mollified by his good breakfast and the very ready way in which Mr. Snark entered into his views.

'Of course, it's only fair. And now as to yourself, Jem, do you think it is quite wise for you to be at large like this? If you're caught, it will be sharp work with you this time. Breaking out of prison is a serious thing. You had better not come to me again. Tell me where I shall find you when I hear of anything?'

Jem considered. He did not feel inclined to place implicit trust in Mr. Snark, but still it was hardly safe for him to venture

out in daylight, and it would be better for Mr. Snark to come to him.

‘Drop me a line,’ he said presently. ‘Send it to John Croker, at Matthew O’More’s, potato merchant, 7, Slope Street, Seven Dials. That’ll reach me. Like some other folks, I find it convenient just now to go by another name than me own, and Mat’s an old friend of mine. I think I’ll be goin’, now. You haven’t a trifle o’ loose cash about you, have you?—just on account, you know. You might deduct it from my share o’ the two thousand.’

Mr. Snark put his hand into his pocket and reluctantly drew forth a sovereign.

‘I haven’t much, myself,’ he said, ‘but this will keep you going for a time. I suppose you’re living at Mr. Matthew O’More’s?’

‘Maybe I am,’ said Jem. ‘He’s a dacent man, an’ I’ve known him this twenty year.’

‘I’d advise you to keep indoors; the

police will be on the look-out for you for some time to come.'

'I expect they will that same, so you may be shure I'll take care o' meself. Good folks are scarce, to my thinkin',' said Jem.

'And I'll let you know from time to time how I get on; but if you should leave Mr. O'More's, you'll drop me a line?'

'I'll get Mat to do that same. I can read a bit, but a pen never came handy to my fingers. I'll be goin' now, an' I hope you'll soon have news of that two thousand. A pound doesn't go far at the price things are, an' it's not as if I could go out in the daylight an' look for work. So good-mornin'. I shall be lookin' you up if you don't look me up soon, but it'll be to supper I'll be comin' next time, instead of to breakfast.'

'You'll have something else to do than

to come here at all, if I can help it,' thought Mr. Snark, but he only said : ' Well, well, take care of yourself, and don't be getting into trouble again ;' and then, as soon as his visitor was gone, sat down and wrote to the magistrate at Bow Street, informing him that Jem O'Brien, who had recently broken prison, was in London, passing under the name of John Croker, and might possibly be met with at Matthew O'More's, greengrocer, 7, Sloper Street, Seven Dials.

This letter was not signed, neither was another which he wrote to the address given by 'G. T.,' appointing a meeting with him at the Golden Lion Coffee-house in the city.

CHAPTER XVI.

DICK'S TEMPER TRIED.

MR. SNARK was, punctually at the time he had fixed, at the Golden Lion Coffee-house. He had said that he would wear a blue frock-coat with brass buttons, a belcher necktie, and Blucher boots ; also a prim-rose in his button-hole. He took care to draw his hat very low down on his face, and his neckcloth very high up to his chin, and then, fixing the innocent little flower he had selected, because it was cheap and easily obtained, in his button-hole, he sallied forth, and at seven o'clock was duly

drinking coffee and eating buttered toast in the city.

Five minutes after seven two young men entered, and looked eagerly round the place. Mr. Snark's heart quailed within him at the sight of Mrs. Thwaites' son and Guy Thurstone. He had fully expected the one, but not the other. Then he reflected that as he had not the missing documents with him, they could not enforce their surrender, and resolved very firmly that he would insist upon being allowed to escape scot-free from the consequences of his little misdemeanour as regarded Mrs. Thwaites, and secure a very handsome reward. Perhaps he might not get the whole two thousand he had bargained for, but Jem O'Brien was hardly likely to put in a claim now, and so he could afford to take less.

Then a bright thought struck him. Perhaps Mr. Richard Thwaites would give something for the recovery of his mother's notes. Mr. Snark was very much afraid

they would never be of any use to him, and if so, why should not the poor woman have them—to help her buy another husband? said Mr. Snark, with a little compassion for the unfortunate widow who had lost him as a husband.

It had been Dick's idea that Guy should offer so large a reward as he had done, and Mr. Deane had not been consulted at all in the matter. As to the money, Guy knew that, once the possessor of his father's acres, he could raise something on them, and Dick had volunteered, on behalf of his uncle and himself, to supply the remainder, or the whole, if cash down was requisite.

'It's a case of true love,' said Mrs. John, appealing to her husband. Dick had taken her into his confidence, both as regarded his own love affairs and Guy's, 'and your money will be as safe as the Bank, and you'll have the comfort of making two true lovers happy.'

Both of the young men were rather surprised when, on a nearer inspection of the wearer of the 'button-hole,' they recognised Mr. Snark. He was a villain, as they knew, but then housebreaking hardly seemed to be in his peculiar line. A friend of Jem O'Brien's—or even that audacious ruffian himself—would have less astonished them.

'I presume you are the person who wrote this letter?' said Guy, producing the epistle Mr. Snark had sent him.

'I am here in consequence of that letter,' said Mr. Snark, not choosing to commit himself. 'I know something of the parties in whose possession are the documents which were missing from a certain house, on the day mentioned in this handbill——'

'Missing! Stolen you mean, Mr. Snark,' cried Dick, fiercely. 'Stolen, like the notes my mother entrusted you with!'

‘Dick ! Dick ! for my sake be still,’ whispered Guy. ‘Give the rascal rope enough, and we can haul him in by-and-by !’

Dick bit his lips and clenched his hands. He would keep quiet for Guy’s sake ; he knew it was wisest and best. But, oh ! if he could only have had the satisfaction of giving Mr. Snark such a drubbing as he deserved !

That gentleman drew himself stiffly up.

‘I object to that word. Besides, even if that word is justified by circumstances, I have nothing to do with the manner in which my clients obtained the property in question. The case lies in a nutshell. They *have* this property—how obtained, or wherefore, it is not my business to inquire—they come to me with this handbill, at least an agent employed on behalf of a principal does, and they ask me to nego-

tiate on their behalf; I undertake the commission as a matter of business. With regard to Mrs. Thwaites——’

‘Yes, sir ; with regard to Mrs. Thwaites !’ burst in Dick, fiercely ; ‘with regard to Mrs. Thwaites, and her money ?’

‘I regret very much that my sudden disappearance from Thorpe Leigh should have led that estimable lady to suffer inconvenience, or the people of Thorpe Leigh to form injurious suspicions regarding my character. But time will show,’ said Mr. Snark, with a lofty wave of the hand. ‘I shall be most happy, if Mr. Richard Thwaites will produce a voucher from his mother, authorising him to receive her monies, to deliver the said monies into his hands——’

‘You’re not half such a rascal as I took you for, Snark !’ burst in Dick.

‘I have been misjudged by many people,’ said Mr. Snark, with a calm air of injured

innocence, 'but time will show. I shall of course expect some compensation on Mrs. Thwaites' part for such misjudgment, and the inconvenience thereby caused.'

'Why, you confounded villain!' burst in Dick.

But Guy put his hand over his mouth and whispered, 'Don't be a fool!' then to Mr. Snark:

'My friend here is a little hasty, and his mother has, as you must be aware, suffered quite as much inconvenience as you can have done. She is at present almost dependent on, and residing with, him.'

'Then I pity him,' said Mr. Snark, in a tone which caused Guy to think that Mr. Snark might have disappeared from Thorpe Leigh less with the view of possessing himself of Mrs. Thwaites' money, than to do so without possessing her as a wife. But he was bent on serving Dick in spite of himself; and, with matrimony in view,

how could he serve Dick better than by enabling his mother to have a home of her own?

‘Give me some idea, Mr. Snark—(don’t be a fool, Dick!)—give me some notion of what your claims on Mrs. Thwaites are likely to be.’

‘I may as well say at once,’ said Mr. Snark, ‘that, unless those claims are settled, I don’t part with the notes. They are not in my possession at the present moment, Mr. Richard Thwaites, so you need not trouble the waiter to send for a constable—a purpose which I see rather clearly written in your eyes. Even if I had the notes with me, no one but the lady who entrusted them into my charge is entitled to ask for them; and as she did so entrust them, even she would find it difficult to prove anything but a little delay on my part in investing her monies. I have not been able to find such an investment as

I could conscientiously recommend to Mrs. Thwaites. When a man has a lady's interests in charge,' said Mr. Snark, looking more virtuously indignant than ever, 'is he not bound to protect them to the utmost of his ability? I have done so. I have not sunk Mrs. Thwaites' money in mines, nor lost it in banks. I have kept it safe—intact—and finding no investment that met my views, I am ready to refund all I hold of hers, either to the lady herself, or to any agent duly commissioned by her to receive it.'

'And your charge, Mr. Snark—your charge for this?'

'A very small sum will satisfy me, considering what aspersions of my character I have had to bear, and what trouble I have taken. Five hundred pounds.'

'Five hundred devils!' cried Dick, springing from his chair, and uttering the words in such a tone that the waiter came

forward, expecting that his services or those of a constable might be needed. 'I'll see you d—— first !'

'You'll never see me married, Dick,' said Guy, 'if you speak like this. Once more—for my sake.'

'Yes ! yes ! I know I'm a fool and an ass,' said Dick, 'but the sight of that fellow is more than I can stand. I'll tell you what, Guy. I'll go outside, and leave you to settle with him—my matters, as well as your own. I know, if I stay here five minutes longer, I shall thrash him black and blue.'

'And you'll never get your mother's money, and I shall never get Deane's deeds, if you do,' said Guy.

So Dick went outside, whispering to the waiter as he went to keep his eye on the box he had left, for the fellow in the blue coat was the biggest villain unchanged that walked the earth, and to call him in if a

row came of it. The waiter promised obedience, and, being a waiter of experience, thought that there was far less chance of a row with Dick out of the house than in it.

Then Guy began to make terms with Mr. Snark. He knew, of course, that the fellow was a scoundrel, and that he had not the slightest claim to the money he demanded; but if it was not paid, Guy felt very sure that Mrs. Thwaites would still remain dependent upon Dick—and a household with Mrs. Thwaites for a resident would not be a delightful one to bring a wife home to. Dick must have his wife and his home to himself, and, if Guy paid that five hundred pounds for him out of his own pocket, he was determined he should have it. He proposed that the lawyer should keep some of the notes, to the amount of the five hundred pounds, and hand over the rest. But Mr. Snark said he would not trust Dick Thwaites to take

the 'stop' off at the Bank, and therefore stipulated for money down, and this, in addition to the two thousand already offered for Reuben Deane's papers, would, Guy felt, be difficult to raise.

Still, it had to be done. Guy had to think of his friend as well as of himself, and the ultimatum arrived at was that, for two thousand five hundred pounds, Mrs. Thwaites's property and Reuben Deane's deeds should be given up within a few days.

'I cannot tell you the day exactly,' said Mr. Snark. 'My client, in whose possession are the deeds, is not in town. I expect him shortly. He is coming upon business. I will write as soon as I hear definitely from him. That will not be long.'

'And Mrs. Thwaites's notes?'

'If I were to produce them you wouldn't have the five hundred ready. Give me that—say to-morrow, and you shall have them.'

Guy thought it over. He believed that Dick, of himself, would never pay the money. He had evidently an idea that a good thrashing would be the best means of obtaining them. And Snark had enough of low, vengeful malice in his nature to burn the notes if he could not obtain his price for them. Guy had five hundred pounds remaining of Miss Chalcombe's legacy, and he determined to spend that in setting Dick free from his mother's claims.

'I'll get my own two thousand *somehow*,' said Guy to himself. 'Perhaps the old lady will help me, perhaps she won't—very likely she won't even pay me back this five hundred. Never mind, it shan't be my fault if Dick and his Mary Ann don't have their home to themselves. Perhaps the Squire may be content to let a little of his money remain on mortgage. With that and Dick's help I shall pull through, then, and win my own wife after all.'

And so it was settled that, the next evening, he was to meet Mr. Snark at the coffee-house again.

‘I’m glad you’ve got rid of that fellow at last,’ said Dick, when Guy came out, and Mr. Snark went on his way. ‘I tell you what, I’ve made up my mind never to give him that five hundred he asks for. If you have your deeds, Guy, I’ll set him at defiance, and let him cool his heels in Newgate. He’ll be glad enough to give up the notes then.’

‘He’ll most likely have burned them by that time,’ said Guy. ‘But we won’t talk any more of the rascal, to-night.’

CHAPTER XVII.

MRS. THWAITES AGGRIEVED.

THE next evening, Dick was with his mother in their sitting-room in Chalton Street. Mrs. Thwaites was fretting over the apparent impossibility of meeting with a house to suit them. Of course, Mary Ann's inclinations had to be consulted now, and they did not quite coincide with Mrs. Thwaites's. Then Dick's mother felt herself aggrieved, and she let Dick know that she was.

'It was a pity,' she was telling him, 'that he ever brought her up to London, away from her friends and the town where

she was so well known and respected. Mary Ann Smith didn't seem to know what she wanted, and when there were two mistresses in a house, one always knew what came of it.'

And, just then, in came Guy, with his face glowing.

'Just in time, by what I hear, Mrs. Thwaites, to tell you that in your house there need only be one mistress, and that yourself. Open that parcel, if you please. I think you will find in it the notes you entrusted to Mr. Snark to be reinvested on your behalf.'

Mrs. Thwaites opened the parcel with trembling fingers. Then, out of a little pocket-book she always carried with her, she took a scrap of paper, and compared it with the notes before her.

'They're all right,' she said—'they're right, every one of them! And how did you get them, Mr. Thurstone? And have

you seen Mr. Snark? I—I think it would have been more becoming of him to have brought them himself.’

‘I *have* seen Mr. Snark, ma’am, and I don’t think he will trouble you. He is quite well, if that interests you—much better than such a villain deserves to be.’

‘Villain, indeed! Mr. Thurstone, he was a very fine-looking man, and a thorough gentleman. Why he should keep my money all this time, putting me to so much inconvenience, and why he shouldn’t bring it himself, is more than I can understand.’

‘It’s very easily understood, mother,’ said Dick. ‘He found I had learned from the bank the numbers of the notes they paid to you, and that I had stopped them. And as to how Guy got them, why, I suppose he has paid the rascal his price, which, like a thick-headed fellow, I refused to do. You

were in the right, Guy ; I see it now. And now, mother, you can go back to Thorpe Leigh as soon as you please, and live in your own house like a lady again. Only first you'll settle with Guy. Five hundred, I suppose, wasn't it ?

'Couldn't do it for less. I drove a hard bargain with the scoundrel, too. But I'm glad you think I've acted for the best, Dick. Your mother would never have had her notes else,' replied Guy.

'Yes, I believe the rascal was capable of lighting his pipe with them, out of sheer spite, if he hadn't got his price,' said Dick. 'Well, mother'—Mrs. Thwaites was tremulously folding up her notes, preparatory to retiring to her room to place them in some safe receptacle there—'settle with Guy before you go. Don't you understand ? You owe him five hundred pounds.'

'I am much obliged to Mr. Thurstone,' said Mrs. Thwaites, in tones of the most

freezing gentility, 'but, another time, I should be glad if he would leave me to manage my affairs for myself. I have always been considered capable of so doing. I am sure, if he had only brought Mr. Snark and me together, that gentleman's good feelings and sense of what was proper would have made him give me back my property without anything so vulgar as a bribe. In fact, considering the position Mr. Snark occupied, and—and—the very delicate relations between us, I wonder Mr. Thurstone should have affronted a gentleman like him by presuming to offer it.'

Then Mrs. Thwaites burst into tears, and swept majestically, taking her notes with her, from the room. Dick looked crest-fallen and ashamed. Then he said, in a very subdued tone of voice :

'Well, if that's gentility, I wish my mother hadn't been born a lady. Never mind, Guy, I'll make it up to you. But,

I say, Guy'—the poor fellow was scarlet, and there were tears in his honest grey eyes—'I used to feel very much concerned that I couldn't be as fond of my mother as other fellows were of theirs. Do you know I find it's very much harder to—to be ashamed of her.'

'Don't take it to heart, Dick, it's only a little tiff. Perhaps, after all, she was fond of the rascal, and takes his behaviour to heart. And what's a few hundreds between you and me? Only I'm so glad you think I did what was right.'

CHAPTER XVIII.

SPIDER AND FLY.

MRS. THWAITES did not come down to breakfast the next morning, sending down word that she had a bad headache, and would like a strong cup of tea. She liked several other things—a new-laid egg, the best part of a red herring, and some toast, all of which Dick carried up dutifully to her, and remained some time in her room, settling her pillows, possibly, and otherwise making her comfortable. Dick, in many ways, was almost as handy as a girl—much more handy than one or two girls I have known. He came down just as Guy had

finished his breakfast, and was giving a finishing brush to his beaver, with a small roll of paper in his hand, which he laid down before Guy.

‘Here they are—the five hundred my mother owes you, Guy. She’s thought better of it—I knew she would, and now you can clear off with the Squire, and Uncle John and I will see you through that little affair of the deeds.

Dick did not tell Guy that he had only obtained the notes he gave him by promising his mother to refund the five hundred pounds they represented, at the earliest opportunity. Mrs. Thwaites, instead of being grateful to Guy, considered herself very much ill-used by him. If Mr. Thurstone had only brought Mr. Snark to her, she persisted, she was sure that he would have given up her money to her without any demur, and then—and then there was no knowing what might have happened.

‘And then, mother, you might have had a bad husband,’ said Dick. ‘No, you wouldn’t, for I should have thrashed him to a jelly, if I did it in the church—so it’s a very good thing for Mr. Snark that Guy didn’t bring you together, as you call it.’

So Mrs. Thwaites lent Dick the money, but she never forgave Guy that he had got her own back for her ; and if Dick, in a year or two, had not refunded it with interest, she would have said, to the day of her death, that Guy Thurstone had cheated her out of five hundred pounds.

Guy was very well pleased to receive it, for he had been thinking of borrowing of Mr. George Glynne, as it was now time for him to send the remainder of the purchase-money for his father’s farm to the Squire’s solicitors. Either that, he thought, or ask his uncle to let that five hundred remain on mortgage. Neither of these was a pleasant alternative, and, as he was now

relieved from choosing either, he was able at once to communicate in a very satisfactory manner with Messrs. Quail and Flint, and also with his uncle.

The Squire received another letter by the same post which brought him Guy's epistle. Mr. Snark said he should be glad of that remaining five hundred pounds which the Squire owed him for certain professional services in his behalf—and perhaps Mr. Chalcombe might like to bring the money to town himself, as he, Mr. Snark, had a client who might be induced, if the security were good, to advance money on the Chalcombe estates, should the Squire require it. His client was a careful man, and would require the best of security—nothing less than the title-deeds of the estate would satisfy him, but as he, Mr. Snark, had reason to believe that Mr. Chalcombe had them in his own possession, if he would bring them to town with him

when he came, there was no doubt that, upon such security, his client might be induced to lend a sufficient sum to relieve Mr. Chalcombe from those embarrassments which he had hinted to Mr. Snark were pressing on him.

‘There!’ said Mr. Snark, when he had finished his letter, and contemplated it with the eye of a skilled workman surveying his last successful piece of work. ‘I don’t think *that* will tell much in any court of law—should the blockhead be inclined to go to one. But I don’t think he will. He’ll give in when he finds that fate is too much for him, and go to his ruin like the ox to the slaughter-house.

In a postscript, after a little further consideration, Mr. Snark suggested to the Squire that as his client was on the look-out for a suitable investment for the large sum of money that he had lying by him, it would be as well for Mr. Chalcombe to

lose no time in meeting him, and, as his client was an old man, to whom a journey to town would be a fatigue, he should suggest the Bull's Head, near Hounslow Heath, as a suitable place. It was near his client's residence, and, as the gentleman in question had, amongst other peculiarities, a dislike to seeing strangers at his own residence, the Bull's Head, being a perfectly respectable place, would be very suitable for a meeting. The coach from Thorpe Leigh did not stop there, but went so near that it would be very easy for Mr. Chalcombe to alight, and he would be sure to meet with some labourer passing who would be only too glad to carry his portmanteau for him.

The poor Squire! His great weakness was a never-ending want of ready money. Even after paying Mr. Snark the thousand pounds he claimed as his reward for making the Squire, as he termed it, once

more the master of his own estate, he would have a thousand left, and that, one would have thought, ought to have set him clear of many of his minor liabilities.

But the Squire was overwhelmed with debt. How the money went, no one could ever tell. The man lived plainly, and, for his day, was only a moderate drinker, and his wife had little enough for her share. But, somehow, the money went. No sooner had the Squire his own deeds in his possession than he ordered a new pair of carriage-gates, and bought a new horse for himself.

Then the fences of the estate all wanted repair, and there was not a cottage that was weather-proof. Everything was rotting away. So the Squire felt that, if indeed he could raise money afresh upon his title-deeds, he might do more for his estate than he had ever done yet. He wanted new stables—and, as to the cottages, it was a question whether he should

not find it cheaper to rebuild than to repair them. Labourers had to be easily contented in those days, but Squire Chalcombe's cottages could not possibly be made to house men much longer, to say nothing of those far more important animals—pigs and dogs.

If he had this money he should be able to do great things—he was always going to do great things whenever money came in. He would have a new carpet for the dining-room and re-cover the chairs, and his wife should have fifty pounds to buy herself some new dresses. It was a shame for a gentleman to let his wife go so bare as Mrs. Chalcombe did. And he would go to Bath, next winter, for a month or so, and have his friends to dinner. People should see that there was a Chalcombe of Chalcombe Grange, after all.

It had always been like this whenever a fresh supply of money came in. Some-

times a little was done of the many things projected—but, somehow, the money went without doing one-tenth part of what ought to be done, and it was certain, now, that Mrs. Chalcombe would not get her dresses, and the labourers would still have to be content with rotting thatch and mouldering walls.

So the Squire wrote that he would be in London on the Thursday of the next week, that he should bring his deeds with him, and very little besides ; for, not liking coaches, which were only fit for old women, he would ride up on his new horse, which was a capital roadster ; and, starting on Monday morning, would rest his horse at Bath for half a day, and so ought easily to arrive at the Bull's Head by Thursday, mid-day.

Mr. Snark felt that fortune was too good to him when he read this letter—the fly seemed walking into the spider's den of his

own accord. Mr. Snark thought things over a little, and then he sent a line to Guy, requesting him to meet him, not at the coffee-house, but at a tavern in the City, where they could have a room to themselves.

‘I shall have some work with that youngster,’ thought Mr. Snark, ‘and he may speak loud—those young fellows have a habit of doing so when they get excited. I suppose it won’t do to ask him to leave that fellow Thwaites at home—um—um—I’ll say that, *should* Mr. Thwaites think it necessary to accompany his friend—a necessity which I do not at all recognise on my own part—I trust he will behave with some regard to the decorum usually observed when transacting matters of business.’

‘Of course I shall go with you, Guy,’ said Dick. ‘Do you think I would trust you with that fellow alone? If I can do

nothing else I can hit out well from the shoulder.'

'But there's no necessity for such hitting,' said Guy. 'If you do come, Dick, I hope you'll keep the peace and your temper.'

'Well, I'll do both—if I can,' said Dick; 'and if I find I can't, I'll walk out of the room, as I did the other day. But, when everything is squared up and settled, Guy, I hope you'll let me settle accounts with Mr. Snark my own way.'

The time Mr. Snark had appointed was evening, and the place a tavern in a little court running up from one of the leading streets of the City. A gloomy old place, looking gloomier than ever at night, with the faint light of oil-lamps on its dreariness. But Mr. Snark had had a fire lit in the room he had engaged, and there was a decanter of port on the table, with glasses and biscuits. He offered the young men wine, which they both declined.

‘We would rather go to business at once,’ said Guy.

‘Very well, then, we will. Are you still ready to give two thousand pounds in return for documents missing from a certain house, on or about February the 14th; among which, I am informed, were the title-deeds of Chalcombe Grange and estate, and sundry other documents, including various mortgages effected on the property by the present Squire.’

‘I have told you,’ said Guy, ‘I think the fellow, whoever he is, that has those deeds is a thorough scoundrel, and I fancy he is not very far off; but I keep my word alike to scoundrels and honest men, and if he places the title-deeds and other papers relating to the estate of Chalcombe in my hands, I will pay him over, within a week, the sum of two thousand pounds.’

‘That will not do,’ said Mr. Snark. ‘I see some of your remarks are aimed at me,

Mr. Guy Thurstone. Rather offensively so, perhaps, but we lawyers, like the doctors and the parsons, are accustomed to be attacked. I keep my temper, I don't take offence, but I must alter the terms of our bargain. I am not, as you seem to imagine, the holder of these deeds, but I know the man who is. He will not give them up very easily. I shall have to bring him into personal contact with you—possibly in collision. It maybe that the services of a police officer will be needed. I cannot help that. But I can arrange that you shall meet him, that he shall have the deeds with him, and then surely two strong young fellows like you can manage the rest. We'll dispense with the police officer, if possible. We don't want a scandal ; but this is what I claim on my part.'

He took up a paper, and read therefrom :

' " That you, Guy Thurstone, duly under-

take to pay me the sum of two thousand pounds as soon as the title-deeds and all other papers connected with the Chalcombe property missing, etc."—there, we needn't go over it all, you can read it for yourself —"are deposited in your hands." I should like Mr. Richard Thwaites to witness this. Also, I must exact a verbal promise from you that whatever accusations the holder of the papers may bring, you will pay no attention to them. Angry men say strange things, and he will be very angry when he finds these papers taken from him. But I am tolerably certain you will let him go scot-free. I must have a verbal assurance from you, Mr. Guy Thurstone, as to my own personal safety.'

Guy Thurstone's face was very pale. He had a pretty shrewd guess, now, as to the holder of these deeds. If his guess were correct, it would indeed be impossible to punish him, otherwise than by taking them from

him. Squire Chalcombe had been rude and brutal to him, but still there was kinship between them; and, for the sake of the name that had been his mother's, he could not let the felon's brand rest on it.

'I am not at all afraid that you will do more than take your own from the present holder of these deeds, so I ask for no pledge on his behalf,' said Mr. Snark. 'I am not at all afraid, either, that if you listened to his representations, you could do more than cause me a slight embarrassment; but I don't want to be delayed. I have made arrangements for leaving this part of the world, and I want to do it as soon as this affair is completed.'

'I must give you my promise,' said Guy. 'You need not be afraid of the law; I shall not set it upon you.'

He read the paper over carefully, Dick looking over his shoulder.

'There is nothing for it, I suppose,' said

he to the latter. 'We must let this fellow have it all his own way.'

He signed, and Dick followed his example. Mr. Snark poured himself out another glass of port—he had had two already—and asked them to join him.

'I shall have to finish the bottle, myself,' he said, and, draining his glass, filled it again. 'Now, I am going to make an appointment,' he said, and held his glass up to the light. 'You gentlemen both know Hounslow? There is an inn where one may dine, passably, if blessed with a good appetite, but where one certainly will not meet with such wine as this. The Bull's Head, on the corner of the heath. Oh! it's a decent place enough. A highwayman may put up there, once in a way, but you need have no fear.'

'I haven't any,' said Guy, coldly. 'What time shall we meet you there, Mr. Snark?'

'We'll say seven on Thursday evening.'

That will suit your business arrangements, and will also suit my client, who has some way to come, and may need a little refreshment after his journey. You will come *prepared*. My client is a bold man, and I warn you he will not part with these papers too easily. Mind, in case of the worst, I recommend a constable.'

'Thank you. I hope we shall not want him,' said Guy, with a quiet sternness in his tone. To think of it, that his mother's brother should have fallen so far that this rascal should have it in his power to advise such treatment!

'And now we'll say good-evening, my young friends. Won't you have a glass? There are yet two left in the bottle. Good-evening, and don't forget Thursday.'

'As if we could!' cried Dick. 'I tell you what it is, Guy, you've promised that the law shan't touch him, but you haven't promised that *I* won't. Once you get your

deeds, and I'll give that fellow such a drubbing, it will be long enough before he's able to spend the two thousand he's talking of. And who do you think has these deeds ?

‘Don't ask me, Dick. There are some things best not talked of.’

CHAPTER XIX.

EACH GOING TO HIS DOOM.

MR. SNARK was very well satisfied with himself after he had parted with Dick and Guy. It was a bold game he was playing, but two thousand pounds was worth playing a bold stroke for. He knew that, once Guy had what he coveted in his possession, he would pay the price, let his feelings for the man to whom he paid it be what they might. The Squire would not give up his documents very easily. There might even be a fight, possibly worse.

‘He’ll carry firearms, travelling alone, thought Mr. Snark. ‘We shall have to be

careful. But he may give them up when he sees there is nothing else for it—he won't like being searched by a constable—so we may manage it without much of a row. Once those deeds are in my hands, he will never get them back into his. Anyway, we won't have the constable in if we can possibly help it. I must get down early, and secure two rooms, if possible, with a door between them. I think when I stopped at the Bull's Head the last time on my way to town, I dined in just such a room. I must get down early and reconnoitre the premises.'

And trimly dressed, still, however, with his handkerchief tied round his throat, and his hat pulled over his eyes, Mr. Snark left London by the Highflyer early on Thursday morning. The day was fine, one of April's sweetest and loveliest—'Just the day,' said Mr. Snark, 'for a little jaunt into the country;' and he pulled down the win-

dow and sniffed the sweet country air with positive enjoyment, and wondered what he had better order at the Bull's Head for dinner.

Ah! it was the country then, along which the Highflyer sped; fine old mansions on either side with their stately trees and spreading gardens; or smaller houses, snug, cosy, and secluded, where the retired tradesman spent his leisure in watering his own roses and picking his own gooseberries. And, between such houses, and stretching far away behind, the pleasant green fields, soon to be golden with buttercups and fragrant with hawthorn hedges. Happy days! when the villa was unknown, and dwellers in London had not to toil through street upon street, and by terraces and crescents, before they could get so much as a glimpse of a brickfield or a dust-covered blade of grass.

Through Hammersmith, then such a

pleasant, well-to-do country town, with the great highway for a background, along the Kew Road, and so through Brentford, which, excepting for its gas-works, has surely altered less than any other town within fifty miles of London. Then the pleasant open country again--tame and flat, if you will, but sweet and green, and rural--and so through Hounslow, with its great posting-houses, and the life and the stir they brought into the town; and then fields again, dotted with here and there a farmhouse or a tiny hamlet, till you came to the great wide heath stretching away for miles on either side, and dotted with the sombre pines that, when the twilight gathered round and the wind shrieked as it flew over the wide expanse, looked as if they were placed there ready for the highwaymen, who seemed to look upon the heath as their own manor, to swing upon in chains when their wild sport was over.

Mr. Snark thought nothing of this. He was enjoying his ride, and getting up his appetite ; and he saw nothing of the dark shabby man, who had mounted outside the coach when he started, and got down after going a very few yards beyond the point where Mr. Snark had alighted.

The coach had gone along the Staines Road when it had left Hounslow, and it was at a side road, which ran across the heath to the Bath Road, that Mr. Snark had alighted. The Bull's Head was at the corner of this road, or lane, and there were a few very small cottages farther on ; and in the Staines Road itself, covered as it now is with villas and houses of various degrees, scarcely a dwelling was to be seen.

‘ Not a lively place, by any means,’ said Mr. Snark, as he looked around ; ‘ but I shall get a good dinner and a warm welcome at the Bull's Head, notwithstanding.’

The Bull's Head was a very unpretending hostel, but Mr. Snark dined fairly well, as he had expected he should dine, off a rump-steak and potatoes. He had a snug little parlour to himself, and a glass of good hot brandy and water after dinner. He had ordered a fire, as the days were still chilly, and sat toasting his feet by the fire, and sipping his brandy and water with great satisfaction.

Would that satisfaction have been alloyed if he could have seen the face of the man in the taproom, eating the crust of bread he had brought with him, and drinking beer, while he, too, warmed his clumsily-shod feet at the taproom fire, unheeding the glances which the landlord cast at him now and then, as he said to himself :

‘That’s a queer customer !’

But the policy of the Bull's Head was uniform. They had some respectable cus-

tomers, and a great many 'queer' ones. On the whole, the 'queer' ones paid the best. This especial 'queer customer' was an exception to the rule, as a pot of six-penny ale contented him, while the visitors of a doubtful character to the Bull's Head, usually ate and drank of the best, looked well to their horses, and fee'd the hostler freely. But they never asked questions at the Bull's Head, let who might come ; and this rule was observed in the present instance, though the taproom customer was certainly no labouring man from the neighbourhood, and mine host could form no guess as to what had brought him thither.

The gentleman in the best parlour, with his brandy and water, began to look out of window now and then, and to utter, half-aloud :

' I wonder when the deuce he will be here.'

Then he would walk to the door, and,

the passage being by the taproom, the visitor there peered out when he did so. Just a glance to see what he was about, and then he would turn and face the fire again.

But the Squire, whom Mr. Snark had been rather impatiently expecting for the last two hours, had been taking *his* ease at *his* inn at the very same time that Mr. Snark had been similarly employed. He had dined at a roadside tavern on the further side of Reading, and, having dined, had also solaced himself after the fashion of Mr. Snark, so that it was nearly four o'clock when he started for the Bull's Head, some hours later than the time at which he should have arrived there.

What did it matter? thought the Squire. A lawyer's time was of little value—very likely his client was such another as himself—or, perhaps, another miser like Reuben Deane. Let them wait! No doubt they

would think it worth their while to do so. There was little fear but that they meant to make a good bargain out of him.

So on he rode—flushed with wine and food—a doomed man to his doom.

The afternoon had turned into evening, and Mr. Snark said to himself:

‘Those youngsters will soon be here. My fine gentleman takes it easy.’

He went to the door of the inn, and looked up and down. Not a soul in sight, but the soft, sweet air from over the heath, and through the pines, blew freshly on his flushed cheeks.

‘I think I’ll go and meet him,’ he said, half aloud. ‘He’ll come down the Bath Road. Landlord, have you a decent nag in your stables? I expect a friend. I should like to ride and meet him; and I shall want a bed when I come back—most likely my friend will want one too.’

The man in the taproom muttered to himself:

‘You’ll want a bed shure enough to-night, but it’s little the softness or the hardness of it will trouble you.’

Yes, the landlord had a nag—a tidy animal had been left in his charge by a customer who had not money enough to pay his bill. The gentleman was welcome to the horse, but he would not advise him to stay out late. It was best to keep early hours on Hounslow Heath.

Mr. Snark laughed, and just showed the butt of a pistol in his breast-pocket.

‘Still, your counsel’s not amiss, landlord,’ he said; ‘I’ll just ride a mile or two to meet my friend. I expected him three hours ago.’

‘Maybe he’s been hindered on the road,’ said the landlord, significantly.

‘Not a likely man to be hindered in the way you mean,’ said Mr. Snark. ‘But

bring out your horse, landlord. I shall be glad of a canter before it is dark—and I expect two gentlemen from London here shortly. Ask them to be good enough to wait for my return.'

So Mr. Snark rode forth in the pleasant April evening, and that grim, shabby figure, having paid its reckoning, stole out of the Bull's Head, and walked, swiftly as death, behind him.

CHAPTER XX.

HOW THE DOOM CAME.

MR. SNARK had not long left the inn when two of the gentlemen he had been expecting walked up to it. They were disappointed at not finding him in. Guy, at least, was eager, anxious, and expectant; and, above all, there was a sense of mystery, an indefinable dread of shame to be brought upon his mother's brother, his own nearest living kinsman, and that partly by his hand, that weighed upon him like an incubus. He sat by the window of the best parlour, drinking the coffee which they had ordered, partly for the good of the

house, and partly because, after their journey from town, they felt the need of some refreshment, and Dick had said :

‘We had better have neither beer nor wine—the cooler and the clearer we keep our heads, when we have to do business with Mr. Snark, the better.’

The evening darkened into night. The stars came out one by one, and the bare, drear, ghostly heath looked drearier and darker and more ghostly than ever, when the white rays of the moon shone upon it. From the taproom came the sound of boisterous voices and rude merriment, as the labourers, from the neighbouring cottages, drank their beer and discussed the affairs of the parish and the nation. And still the man they had come to meet did not return ; and that other man, who was coming up from the West country to be brought face to face with dishonour and shame, did not appear. Guy grew uneasy.

‘Can they have quarrelled?’ he said to Dick.

‘They would have been here just the same,’ answered the other. ‘Snark never lets his temper run away with him—but he may have let his horse.’

The landlord came in with candles. He looked puzzled and uncomfortable.

‘The gentleman you were to meet has ridden too far,’ he said. ‘I hope he hasn’t fallen into bad company. I told him folks should keep early hours on Hounslow Heath.’

And, as he spoke, there came a shrill, wild sound upon the air—the neigh of a horse in desperate fear. The landlord started.

‘No beast, with a rider on him, would neigh like that.’

And out into the open before the inn they went, and there stood, with distended nostrils and flashing eyes, the horse upon

which, such a short time back, a guest had rode forth into the pleasant April air. Foam at the nostrils, heaving sides, coat wet with sweat.

‘The beast has galloped away for his life,’ said the landlord, as he stroked and soothed him ; ‘but where is his rider ?’

‘They’ve met—and they’ve fought—and there’s been murder,’ said Guy, in a hoarse whisper to his friend.

‘There may have been murder, but there’s been no fight,’ said Dick ; ‘Snark was never the man for that.’

‘The gentleman was going down the Bath Road—him that I lent the horse to,’ said the landlord, turning to Guy, ‘the same that you expected, sir. Shall we take lanterns, and some of the men, with us ?’

The taproom was empty of its inmates, who had now all gathered round the trembling, panting horse.

Guy nodded assent, adding, 'The sooner the better.'

'Best take a shutter,' said the landlord, in a low tone, to one of the men.

'Bring *two*!' said Guy, in a louder.

'No need,' murmured Dick; 'I know Snark better than you, Guy. He has worked the Squire up to madness, and he has shot him like a dog, as he did the highwayman who stopped him five and twenty years ago. Keep quiet, lad; Snark has deserved all he has got, and you wouldn't have your mother's brother hung for a fellow like him.'

On they went, down the lane towards the Bath Road, and for a mile along that before they came to what they sought. A figure, motionless and stiff, with a face so bruised and disfigured that no man could have recognised it as Mr. Snark's. But the dress, the watch, and the seals, were proof enough, to those who knew him, that

craft and cunning would avail him never more.

Near him lay an old horse-pistol, stained with blood and with hair adhering to it. This, it was clear, was the instrument by which the wretched man had been beaten and bruised to death.

‘This is not the Squire’s doing,’ whispered Dick to Guy.

‘No—thank God !’ was the almost inaudible answer.

And then there came another sound upon the still evening air—a low groan, as of one in intense pain ; and, going a little further, they found Squire Chalcombe, his dress in almost perfect order — his horse grazing near him—but with a white face turned up to the moonlight, and a little tiny stream of blood welling away drop by drop from the breast. As Guy bent over him, the light of one of the lanterns fell full upon his face, and the Squire, seeing it, looked

up with scared puzzled eyes, and murmured, 'Lucy.' It was his sister's face he saw, and not her son's.

'He is my uncle,' said Guy, briefly, to the men around. 'Take him up very carefully. Dick, will you mount his horse and ride to Hounslow for the nearest doctor.'

So they took the Squire back to the Bull's Head, walking more slowly than when they left it; and, behind, came other men with a still drearier load on that *second* shutter which Guy Thurstone had ordered them to bring.

All that night Guy watched by his uncle's bedside, and from the muttered incoherent words of the Squire, he gathered a clue as to the manner in which he and the man who had sought to entrap him had come by their doom. They had been talking together, and then a shot was fired from behind a hedge.

'It was meant for Snark,' gasped the

Squire, 'but my beast plunged forward, and so I came by what never was meant for me.'

Then Snark had helped him from his horse and laid him on the grass, but, while he was doing so, another shot came which seemed to wound Snark, and scared his horse, which started off; and then some fellow sprang out, and there was a fight between him and Snark.

'And I fired at the ruffian as I lay,' said the Squire, 'for I knew he had given me my death.'

That was true enough. The doctor said there was little time for Squire Chalcombe in this world. But there were no traces to be found of the man who had killed him, and whom he was certain, he said, with a grim satisfaction, he had paid back in his turn. But, two days after, an Irishman died in a low lodging-house near Hounslow, to which he had managed to crawl; and he raved in

his dying hours of an informer with whom he had settled accounts, though the man who had wronged poor Mary had escaped him.

‘But there’s another world,’ said Jem, as he closed his eyes upon this, ‘an’ I’ve no doubt the villin will get his desarvin’s there.’

The next morning the Squire was worse—sinking rapidly, the doctor said. Then he called Guy :

‘A little nearer, boy. I suppose you’ll have the old place, after all. Well, you’ll make as good a Chalcombe as any of us—and—and—in my saddle-bags—have they taken one of them?—you will find the title-deeds of the old place. Keep them, or give them to Deane. I suppose you will do the last. Good-night.’

And the Squire spoke never a word again.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE FINISH.

DICK's epitaph on Snark was short and concise. 'He was a rascal, and he came by a rascal's death, falling into the very trap he dug for another.' And they buried him out of the way in Hounslow churchyard. But the last of the Chalcombes, Guy, as his nearest kin, took down to the old church, and there he sleeps with his forefathers for generations past.

Then Guy, having done his duty to the dead, had to think of the living. When he took the deeds, of which he had been robbed,

to Reuben Deane, the old man took them almost sorrowfully, having heard, before, of the manner in which Guy had come into their possession.

‘I always meant you should be master of Chalcombe, Guy,’ he said, ‘but not—not in this way. God forgive me! I had meant to humble that man to the very dust, to trample on him and taunt him with his beggary, as he trampled on and taunted me five-and-twenty years ago. And it has been willed otherwise. He has had an awful doom, but he has been spared the vengeance I would have inflicted. It is better for him. It is better for me, Guy! If I know myself, I should have spared him *nothing*. If I could have had him in the Old Bailey for receiving those deeds, I should have placed him there.’

The old man’s lips trembled, and his hands shook, as he turned over his deeds and saw that nothing was missing except

those two papers on which he had once said hung the life of a man.

‘Jem O’Brien has lost his revenge, as I have lost mine,’ he said. ‘Into His own hands God has taken the vengeance we each sought for so eagerly.’

Guy drew Eunice away. It was not a time just then to speak to Reuben Deane of wooing and wedding. But when they were alone, he said to the girl :

‘I have done my task, sweet. The prince has won his lady.’

‘He won her years ago,’ she murmured, ‘when she was not the lady bright he is pleased to think her now, but a poor plain crippled child, whom he carried tenderly in the strong arms that he said should clear his father’s name.’

But she was always his lady to him, and he was always her prince, till grey hairs came, and they sank to their last sleep together but a little time ago.



day, for whom the world will be little the better and few lives the sweeter.

Only Guy and his Eunice have left children—and children's children, too—which, in spite of all the descendants of George Glynne, gives one a little hope for our poor humanity, after all.

THE END.





